

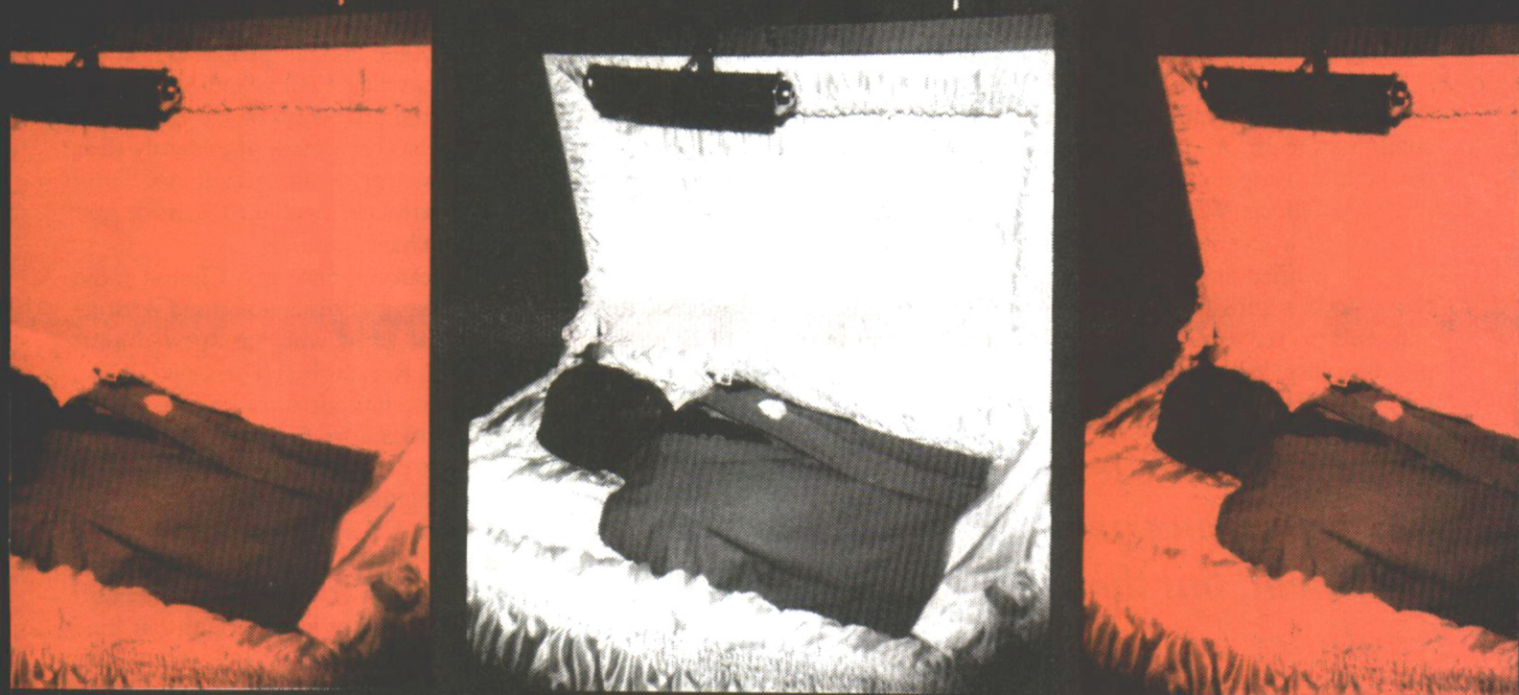
TOP STORY: THE WORLD BANK'S UNHAPPY BIRTHDAY

October 3-16, 1994

In THESE TIMES

the alternative newsmagazine

DEAD WRONG



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How the media misfires in its
coverage of urban crime

By Salim Muwakkil
page 12

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EDITORIAL

AN AMBIGUOUS FIRST STEP IN HAITI

The restoration of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to office is one of those rarest of occurrences: a Washington foreign policy move that conforms to officially enunciated principles. Rhetorically, there was little choice. After all, Aristide was elected in 1990 with 70 percent of the vote in Haiti's first democratic election. And he was overthrown by a bloodthirsty military—acting at the behest of the island's tiny ruling class—that routinely slaughtered supporters of the ousted president.

As the self-proclaimed defender of democracy throughout the world, Washington had at least to give lip service to rescuing it in Haiti. And lip service was all that Aristide and the Haitian people received from George Bush during his final years in the White House. In 1992 Bill Clinton campaigned on a promise to return Aristide to power, but in office he waffled and began begging Gen. Raoul Cédras to share power with his victim. This only encouraged the Haitian military to destroy Aristide's base of popular support by conspicuously hacking down its leaders.

Finally, the attacks became too bald and the refugees too numerous. But even then it took the Congressional Black Caucus, a group of wealthy Hollywood liberals and a hunger strike by human rights advocate Randall Robinson to make Clinton change direction. First he went to the U.N. and pushed through a stringent trade embargo. Then, when that didn't work, he began threatening an invasion.

Aristide is returning as president, but the military leaders responsible for three years of terror remain perilously close to power.

Cédras, however, had become convinced that Clinton would never carry out the threat. A handful of his thugs had already

scared off a U.S. Navy ship carrying human rights observers to Port-au-Prince. And opposition to Aristide by the media, the CIA and Republican leaders and conservative Democrats in Congress appeared certain to keep Clinton from acting. Even at the last minute, when ex-president Jimmy Carter, Sen. Sam Nunn (D-GA) and former Pentagon chief of staff Gen. Colin Powell came to negotiate his resignation, Cédras refused to give in until he was convinced that the invading force was on its way.

So now we have an agreement that Cédras and his closest associates will step down on October 15. But does this guarantee that the Haitian military and police will be stripped of

their power and that Aristide will be allowed to exercise the full authority of his office? The vast majority of Haitian refugees in this country do not think so, and neither do we. Nor is there anything in the history of U.S.-Haitian relations, or in the policies of the Clinton administration, to give assurances that democracy will be restored along with Aristide.

Aristide himself will certainly try to neutralize the forces that the country's elite and their American corporate compatriots have used to subdue the Haitian people. But at the time of this writing it appears that Cédras and his cohorts will remain in Haiti under the protection of the American-led occupation force, and it has been made abundantly clear that the business, military and political forces that Clinton consistently bends to are extremely hostile to Aristide and the popular democracy for which he stands.

In delivering the Republican response to a Clinton radio address, Rep. Bob Livingston of Louisiana accused Aristide of being a fanatical "radical leftist who has spewed anti-American venom for years." Rep. Robert Torricelli (D-NJ), the hawk from whom Clinton has taken his lead on Cuban policy, denounced attempts to restore Aristide. And the CIA is sticking by its anti-Aristide propaganda—and by its assets among the top ranks of the Haitian military.

On the *MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour*, Carter praised Cédras as a principled man of honor. And he implied that Cédras and the other assassins who normally run Haiti under U.S. sufferance would be kept in the country at least until 1996, when a new president will be elected and American troops are scheduled to be withdrawn.

In short, the struggle for democracy in Haiti is not over. An ambiguous first step has been taken, which is to the good if it is not the last step. The next step must be the removal from Haiti of those responsible for the events of the past three years, or they must be placed on trial and imprisoned. Beyond that, Aristide must be allowed to exercise his constitutional powers unimpeded by U.S. efforts to control and exploit Haiti. Only then will we be able to say that democracy has been restored. ◀

Note to readers: Joel Bleifuss is on paternity leave.

IN THESE TIMES

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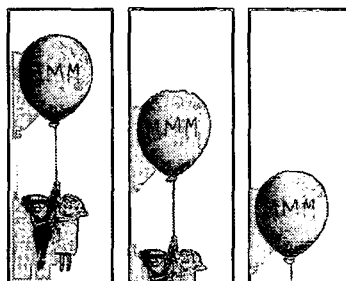
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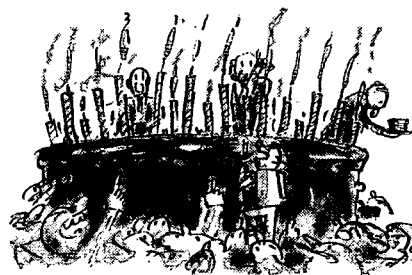
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LETTERS

Nixing Nixon

Will Nixon displays a remarkable lack of perspective on population issues in his article "Crowded out" (*ITT*, September 5). A little math reveals the pronouncements of the "new Malthusians" to be no less wrong than those of the original. There are roughly 250 million people in the United States and roughly 1 billion people in India, and the average U.S. per capita resource consumption is roughly 20 times what it is in India. 20 times 250 million is 5 billion "Indian equivalents" in the United States. The United States thus has five times the impact on the global ecosystem that India has. Another way of looking at the current situation is that about 5 billion people can be added to the current population if the resources consumed in the United States were evenly

distributed among them, so the Earth can support 10 billion people at current resource consumption.

So, what are we to make of the pronouncements of "experts" who say we must stabilize the world population at 8 billion or so? Clearly, they are assuming that we should maintain the current discrepancy in consumption between the imperial North and the exploited South. Just as the original Malthus justified policies that benefited the rich at the expense of the poor, the "new Malthusians" are attempting to justify current disparities.

Although I am all for freedom of sexual choice and non-traditional family structures, I must side with the Catholic Church and the Muslim religious organizations who criticize the U.S. position in the International Conference on Population and Development meeting in Cairo. Questions of

morals aside, maintaining the existing distribution of resources by focusing on population control in the impoverished countries of the world will not achieve the stated goal of preserving the planet's ecosystem. About one-fifth of the resources consumed by the United States support the private automobile as the primary means of transportation. We need to look at more resource-efficient means of providing public transportation before we criticize 1 billion people for consuming an equivalent amount of the world's resources.

Chris Vail
San Jose, Calif.

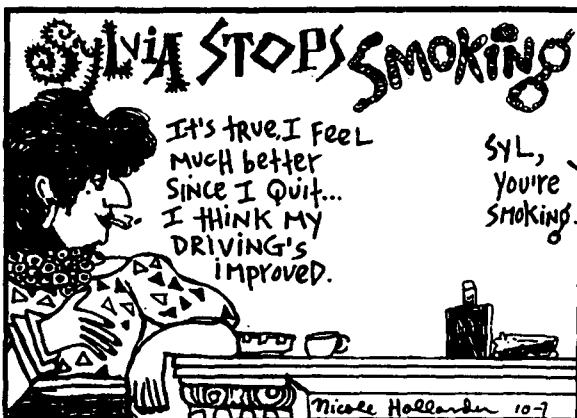
Dubious

Explaining impoverishment and political crises in terms of overpopulation—"the sheer crowding of the land," as Will Nixon puts it (*ITT*, September 5)—is highly dubious. If Africa is poor because it is overpopulated, why isn't Europe twice as poor, since it has almost twice as many people per square mile (132 vs. 69)?

Nixon cites crises in countries like Bosnia and Somalia as arguments for population control. If Bosnians can't get along because there are too many of them in too small a space (at 234 people per square mile), why isn't there ethnic cleansing in Belgium, with 860? And Somalia, with only 27 people per square mile, hardly suffers from lack of elbow room. Iraq and Mexico, two

SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander



other countries put forward as evidence that Malthus was right, are also relatively low-density countries.

For every hungry, war-torn country that actually is crowded, a peaceful, well-fed country can be found with as many or more people. The Netherlands has nearly twice the density of Haiti (1166 vs. 600 per square mile); Taiwan has twice the density of Rwanda (1,693 vs. 845).

This is not to cheer on unbridled population growth, or to argue that increasing population doesn't have a negative effect on the environment and global resources. But it simply isn't the major factor in why some people are poor or violent and others are not. I would think that a progressive publication like *In These Times* could come up with a deeper explanation for why Third World people are starving than that there are too many of them.

Jim Naureckas

Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting
New York

to those that accompanied U.S. hostilities with Libya, Iraq and Iran.

A significant number of the Cuban people still believe that the cause of their misery is the U.S. embargo. The Cuban government plays this card admirably, and the State Department plays right into Castro's hands.

Lorenzo Canizares

Trenton, N.J.

Representation

In her discussion of John Roemer's book *A Future for Socialism* (ITT, August 8), Nancy Folbre does not say whether stockholder voting in Roemer's envisioned corporations would be on the basis of "one vote per share" or "one vote per member." That latter principle is, of course, the time-tested one used by Rochdale-type cooperatives, 150 years old this year.

I think that democratic socialism would be in better shape today if it had placed less emphasis on nationalization and more emphasis on changing corporation laws to provide for "one member, one vote" and other reforms while still providing for competition, profit and the freedom to start new businesses.

What I would like to see is "open enterprise" market competition between independently owned and democratically run corporations, each with a board of directors representing not only stockholders but also other *stakeholders*. One mix might be 60 percent of the board elected by the stockholders (again, by "one member, one vote"), 15 percent each elected by employees and customers and the remaining 10 percent representing community and environmental groups, and possibly other public interests.

Harry Hyde Jr.
Bryn Mawr, Penn.

THE ADVENTURES OF A HUGH MOUTH

by Peter Hannan

Castro's dupes

I congratulate *In These Times* for the well-balanced and well-reported article on Cuba by Rick Rockwell (ITT, August 8). It is rare to see a balanced viewpoint on Cuba in a progressive publication.

Rockwell notes that the "U.S. State Department doesn't understand why economic conditions haven't triggered serious political problems for Cuban leader Fidel Castro." And then he explains how Castro survives: "[I]n response to American criticism, Cuban officials defend their country as the vanguard of socialist revolution, speaking of a spirited people battling an evil economic blockade by the United States."

The Cuban government has it made. Leaders can blame the U.S. embargo for whatever inefficiency exists—and rally Cubans in support of their homeland. It seems our State Department does not learn from its experience in other countries. This "spirited people" syndrome is similar



InSHORT



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BEATING SWORDS INTO SWORDS

A group of American companies is putting a twisted new spin on the biblical prophet Isaiah's oft-quoted metaphor for peace, "They shall beat their swords into ploughshares." The companies, which hope to use plutonium from atomic bombs to fuel two nuclear power plants in Washington state, are calling their plan the "Isaiah Project."

Behind the project is a consortium known as Columbia Nuclear Corp., which consists of three players: the Science Applications International Corp., the Newport News Industrial Corp. and the Battelle Memorial Institute. Their plan is to obtain \$7.3 billion on Wall Street by floating government-backed bonds. Of that, \$3.3 billion would pay for completing two partially finished nuclear plants in Washington state—one at the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) controversial Hanford Nuclear Site and another 200 miles west near Olympia. An additional \$2 billion would pay off debt still owed by one of the plant's owners, the federal Bonneville Power Administration. The last \$2 billion would go to the Russian and Ukraine governments to aid similar weapons-into-electricity projects in their countries.

"The concept provides the Department of Energy and Department of Defense with a cost-effective, safe and efficient way to reduce U.S. stockpiles



By Woody Igou

The future of reading

In Florida's panhandle, the *Panama City News Herald* has adopted a sure-fire program to get kids excited about school. The "1994 Pigskin or Tackle Geography" education



program was promoted in the newspaper with the banner headline

"Attention Teachers!" As part of the "exciting" program, students will learn reading, social studies and math by following football stories in the newspaper's sports section. All students signed up for the program will receive the *News Herald* at half price.

Coming soon: "Puck 'n' Duck"—an interactive hockey/quantum physics program for high school students.

Listen or else

In a politically sensitive version of *Star Search*, China's Culture Ministry recently announced that "an official contest of revolutionary songs" will be held in honor of the 45th anniversary of the People's Republic on October



1. In what one hopes is not an example of the lyrics to be submitted, the

Xinhua News Agency reported that "[t]he contest is aimed at carrying on the glorious tradition and promoting greater glory." Senior leaders, including Deng Xiaoping, will be submitting songs in the competition.

Maybe it'll start a new hoppin' dance step "The Changuchow!"
[Trans.: "There's a tank on my foot."]'

Trusting a rattlesnake

In a ridiculously self-serving ad placed recently on the *New York Times* op-ed page, Mobil Oil vigorously attacked the notion that our society needs to look toward alternative fuels. The ad claims that calls for alternative fuels are "yesterday's thinking" and that such



claims "no longer have substance." It further argues that alternative

fuels—electricity, ethanol, methanol and compressed natural gas—"simply cannot compete with gasoline." However, the ad does describe a "clean alternative fuel coming in January that can compete" and surprise—it's called "reformulated gasoline (RFG)" and will be marketed in urban areas where smog is a problem. *I get it—gasoline is an "alternative" to gasoline.*

APPALL-O-METER SCALE

1. Vapid Cultural Zephyrs
2. E Channel Stupid
3. Unauthorized Biography Zone
4. Republican Convention Rerun
5. Bob Dole Spleenic
6. Mega-Dittos from Hell
7. NRA Heart and Brains
8. Pyongyang on my mind
9. Disavowed by Bosnian Serbs
10. Murry, Melt the Polar Cap!

of weapons-grade plutonium," an Isaiah project brochure asserts. In addition, according to proponents, the scheme would provide jobs in Russia and the Ukraine, replace unsafe reactors in those countries and resolve nuclear proliferation disputes between the two nations. Backers of the project have asked the Department of Energy for \$25 million for planning and an environmental impact study. Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary says she opposes the plan, but staff members in her agency are still considering it.

What Isaiah's proponents are counting on is that the American public, after five decades of living on the brink of nuclear holocaust, will find the warheads-into-electricity logic seductive. The United States possesses between 50 and 100 tons of plutonium in its warheads, and the former Soviet republics at least as much. The plutonium sits in concrete bunkers near Amarillo, Texas, in Tomsk, Siberia, and at missile sites around the world. With the fall of the Soviet bloc, this chief ingredient in nuclear weapons is also showing up in some strange places: an apartment in Moscow and a house in Stuttgart, Germany.

The Isaiah Project's backers are right when they say something must be done to address the global proliferation of plutonium. But when plutonium is run through a nuclear plant the end result is only more plutonium. "It produces material that can still be used to build an atomic bomb," says Dr. Richard Belsey of the Physicians for Social Responsibility. "This is not how a reasonable person defines plowshares."

Critics also point out that as the plutonium is trucked from Texas to Washington state, it would be exposed to the possibility of theft or accident. Then, to use the plutonium from weapons in reactors, it would have to be reprocessed. The land and water at Hanford are already contaminated with extraordinary amounts of pollution from four decades of plutonium reprocessing. More than 400 billion gallons of liquid radioactive waste were dumped there over the years, much of it leaching into the nearby Columbia River. The Isaiah Project would continue the reprocessing for another four decades, adding to the pollution at Hanford and newly contaminating the proposed Isaiah site in Olympia. The key ingredient generated by reprocessing would be plutonium-239, the isotope used in nuclear weapons, which has a half-life of 24,000 years. Once the fuel is used, it must be stored. Yet there is no specified location for storage.

And, as the DOE's O'Leary further explains, even if using plutonium were safe, the resulting electricity would not be economical. In fact, the Isaiah Project could not fly without federal subsidies. The government would provide the plutonium and convert it into fuel rods. The feds would also be expected to take over ownership of the two power plants. And taxpayers would probably foot the bill for any future cleanup costs. As of now, there is no known way to restore nuclear sites and no place to put the high-level waste.

Under current law, the Isaiah Project could not be built in the United States. The reprocessing of plutonium has been illegal here since the Clinch River Breeder Reactor project in Tennessee was killed during the Carter administration. Some powerful members of Congress favor changing the law to allow for nuclear projects like Isaiah. But critics say the Isaiah Project is all the more dangerous because it comes at a time when Congress is deciding whether to approve a new generation of advanced reactors that also would reprocess plutonium. By opening the door on reprocessing, Isaiah would slam the door on a proposed worldwide ban on the production of plutonium and other weapons-usable materials.

—Paul Koberstein and Robin Klein

WHISTLING IN THE DARK

Government workers who lay their careers on the line to expose dangers to public safety often find that U.S. whistleblower laws provide them little protection. Consider the case of Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) whistleblower William Marcus, who was recently reinstated to his job after a three-year legal battle.

An EPA senior science adviser, Marcus first found himself in hot water after authoring a memo that challenged the agency's position on the potential health threats of fluoride. In apparent retaliation for his actions, the EPA inspector general's office began an investigation of Marcus in 1989. In November of 1991, Marcus was charged with nearly two dozen separate allegations of misconduct.

What is particularly disturbing about Marcus' case is the possibility that corporations opposed to his work may have helped orchestrate the EPA campaign against him. One of a small number of board-certified, internationally renowned toxicologists, Marcus had agency permission to engage in non-conflicting side-jobs as an expert witness for plaintiffs suffering harm from toxics.

Marcus' attorney, Steve Kohn, charges that the EPA was pressured to go after Marcus by companies manufacturing chemicals that he had, in his role as an expert witness, described as dangerous. In one of his free-lance cases, Marcus testified that the pesticide chlordane causes severe health effects in humans. Kohn argues that the Velsicol Co., which manufactures chlordane, began in 1988 to urge contacts within the EPA inspector general's office to launch an investigation to discredit Marcus.

In charges later dismissed by an administrative law judge, the EPA alleged that Marcus had billed for consulting hours while on the agency's clock. And the EPA's case went further than charges of corruption. "They had my frontline supervisor write a defamatory note that I made a threat to

kill her and was a threat to staff, and she circulated it throughout the agency," Marcus recalls. "On the stand, under examination by the administrative law judge, this supervisor admitted I hadn't threatened her and said her fear was based on what she was told by others."

In December of 1992, administrative law judge David A. Clarke Jr. ruled that "the reasons given for Dr. Marcus' firing were a pretext and that his employment was terminated



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MEDIA BEAT

By Pat Aufderheide

Asking for it

As if to test the will of legislators and regulators hell-bent on reining in TV violence, this fall's schedule features a plethora of new action shows, including *Mantis*, *McKenna*, *Under Suspicion* and *The Legendary Journeys of Hercules*.

Why would producers want to risk provoking the ire of critics like Rep. Byron Dorgan (D-ND), who wants to institute a TV violence "report card," and Federal Communications Commission chairman Reed Hundt, who recently exhorted the American Psychological Association to continue its anti-TV-violence crusade?

Because action is where the money is for overseas sales. Hour-long action television shows are second only to major feature films in international revenues for Hollywood. And international sales can now make the difference between profit and loss. From *MacGyver* in Cantonese to *Quantum Leap* in French, action travels faster, and more lucratively, than words.

Entangling alliances

Will Time Warner really buy NBC? Will Disney really buy CBS? Will ABC become a merger target? Will Ted Turner finally get his own entertainment network? All of the much-discussed deals with the Big Three TV networks seem like long shots, and maybe not even smart investments. But it's clearer than ever that the major telecom players see strength in size, as the information superhigh-

way rhetoric slowly transforms into far messier corporate reality.

Loosening regulation is changing the television landscape. As early as next year, networks may be able to own their own programs, and even to program in the early evening, which has long been reserved—to encourage competition—for non-network programs. Suddenly, program producers are considering ownership of a network.

The threat of behemoth phone company entry into television has meanwhile driven large companies to consolidate further. Time Warner, the country's second largest cable operator, has just folded several Newhouse-owned companies into its operations, for instance.

Voice of experience

Rob Fulop, designer of *Night Trap* (a violent video game that became a whipping boy for anti-violence crusaders'), discusses the challenge of creating interesting video games in the latest issue of *Wired*. He'd like a more creative challenge as well as to "atone for the sins of *Night Trap*," he says. But the problem is "that the ability to make believe is almost nonexistent today. ... Ask 12-year-olds now to make up a story.

They don't know how. ... And I attribute that to VCRs and video games. It may make it hard for new multi-player role-playing games to exist. If kids are being slowly destroyed by the stuff we're giving them to do, then they're not going to be able to know how to play them."

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because he publicly questioned and opposed EPA's fluoride policy." Furthermore, Clarke discovered that the inspector general's office had illegally covered its tracks, "shredd[ing] all investigation notes made ... during interviews"—despite pending congressional, administrative and Freedom of Information Act investigations into the case.

In an unusually strong victory for a government whistleblower, Clarke ordered the EPA to give back pay, fringe benefits and interest; reinstate Marcus as a senior science adviser; pay attorney's fees; and kick in an unheard of \$50,000 in compensatory damages.

Yet Marcus was not reinstated until this summer. For a year and a half, the EPA kept him in limbo, without pay, while appealing the case to the Department of Labor. Marcus might still be waiting if the office of Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) had not sought the attention of the secretary of labor in the matter. And those who have wronged Marcus continue to escape penalty. "My supervisor has since gotten a promotion and an increase in pay, and is a division director," he says. EPA Inspector General John Martin, a Republican appointee, also remains in office.

Unfortunately, Marcus' case may be all too typical. A recent report by the Merit Systems Protection Board—an independent, quasi-judicial federal agency that rules on some personnel cases—concludes that over a third of federal workers who point out waste, fraud or abuse are threatened by their supervisors with reprisals, an increase of over 50 percent from a decade ago.

—Skip Kaltenheuser

TOMORROW'S NEWS TONIGHT

by Steve Brodner



**Under
agreement
Cedras
is made
commissioner
of baseball.**

I N P E R S O N



IN POWER

*Tokyo Sexwale
appeals politically*

Tokyo Sexwale, a regional politician for the African National Congress (ANC), has endured a rough few months, but it hasn't put a dent in his charismatic demeanor. During Sexwale's campaign for governor of the Johannesburg/Pretoria region last spring, he was shot at in Tokoza township. Then one of his key aides was killed in a bomb attack on his headquarters, reportedly planted by right-wing white extremists.

Now, as premier of South Africa's industrial heartland, he has to satisfy voters who have high expectations but lack the resources to realize their dreams.

"Nationalization is part of our agenda," Sexwale says. "More people must be given more ownership to equalize the wealth of this country." And he vows to uphold the ANC pledge to return the land to the people. "Our people have been dispossessed," he says. "The land will have to come back to us by many different means."

ETC.

By Jim McNeill

Brownout

During the 1992 presidential campaign Candice Bergen, aka Murphy Brown, gained fame for her family values feud with then-Vice President Dan Quayle. In portraying TV's most famous single mother, Bergen crusaded on behalf of unwed mothers scorned by society for their alleged irresponsibility.

In real life, however, Bergen—who moonlights as a spokesperson for Sprint, the notoriously anti-union long-distance phone company—has shown considerably less concern for society's dispossessed.

In July, Sprint closed La Conexión Familiar, a subsidiary that sold Spanish-language long-distance services to U.S. customers, throwing its 235 employees—many of whom are single mothers—out of work. The closing came just one week before the company's workers were scheduled to vote on joining the Communications Workers of America—approximately 70 percent had signed petitions requesting the election.

In August, the company's workers placed a full-page ad in *Variety*, asking Bergen to intervene with Sprint to save their jobs. So far, Bergen has not responded to their appeal.

Although Bergen has remained silent, the formerly moribund National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) has come strongly to the workers' defense. Last month, the NLRB filed an emergency injunction in federal court, asking the court to order Sprint to rehire the 235 workers. The NLRB said Sprint illegally closed La Conexión Familiar in order to

© APRIL OLIVER

block the union organizing drive.

The labor board also charged Sprint with dozens of other labor law violations, saying the company intimidated union supporters and threatened to close the subsidiary if the workers voted for the union.

By filing the emergency injunction, the NLRB accelerates the normally glacial pace of U.S. labor law—a good sign for the La Conexion employees, since workers often have to wait years to find out whether or not they can have their jobs back.

The NLRB's aggressive action marks an important departure from its lifeless behavior during the Reagan-Bush years. Since Clinton appointee Fred Feinstein took over as NLRB general counsel on March 3, the board has filed 58 emergency injunctions—double the number filed in all of 1992 and 1993.

"We're very pleased with the NLRB complaint," said CWA research economist Steve Abrecht. "This is a very positive step, not only for the [La Conexion Familiar] employees, but for all workers."

Sprint officials disagree. They insist the closing had nothing to do with the union election; rather, they claim, La Conexion Familiar was losing money. However, the company's workers told the *California AFL-CIO News* that they routinely exceeded the new customer goals Sprint set for them. They also received an in-house newsletter praising their productivity and applauding the profits they were earning for Sprint.

An administrative law judge will begin hearing the case on November 8.

Yet Sexwale is determined that South Africa not follow the African path of development. He acknowledges that corruption and waste have been endemic throughout the continent, and pledges strong medicine against such approaches in South Africa. "Corruption comes when people don't have rights. We are going to be accountable," he promises.

But despite such promises, the people are already growing impatient. Foreign investment has not flooded back to the "engine room" of the South African economy, the Johannesburg/Pretoria region. Sexwale pledged he would build 150,000 units of housing a year. So far, he has only managed to raise the roof of one showcase home, which provides little consolation for the 2 million people in his region who want housing.

In many ways, Sexwale's short tenure mirrors that of the entire ANC. Despite high hopes and more than 100 days in office, nothing much has changed. Yet Sexwale remains a popular figure in South African politics.

Though only a regional government official, Sexwale is already being hailed as a future president of the new South Africa. He may have to wait his turn, after such ANC luminaries as Thabo Mbeki and Cyril Ramaphosa. But Sexwale, at the tender age of 42, possesses magnetic powers that might allow him to leapfrog over the other front-runners in Mandela's inner circle. Namely, sex appeal. During a recent radio poll that asked who was the most attractive politician in the country, many white suburban housewives phoned in to nominate him. Even Tokyo Sexwale's name, pronounced with a silent X, exudes a certain allure. And how did he get the nickname "Tokyo"? "Karate," he says. "But I was a bad karatist. I only achieved a brown belt. But the reason I took it was that as a sport it encouraged two disciplines. It disciplined the body very effectively, but it also disciplined the mind."

Sexwale denies immediate aspirations to be Mandela's successor, but it is clear that he has much support at the grass roots. He seized the respect of the country last year on the day that Chris Hani, the ANC deputy chairman and leader of the South African Communist Party, was gunned down at home. Sexwale, who lived nearby, arrived and wept openly over Hani's bloody corpse. Later, after riots caused by Hani's murder, he insisted on national television that "the assassination of Chris Hani in South Africa—I'm not talking about it sparking a war, but I think it must spark a peace here."

Sexwale is also married to an Afrikaner, who was his lawyer when he was jailed on Robben Island. He spent 13 years in prison, for having conducted underground political work and military training for the ANC's guerrilla wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe.

Despite his long imprisonment and the ongoing political violence, Sexwale is upbeat, having made the transition from soldier to prisoner to politician. He thinks South Africa's political transition has been remarkably peaceful. "The violence could have been much worse. This should have been a very violent revolution, and instead it has been a negotiated peace."

Sexwale even extends his hands to the remaining rejectionists, the white right. "We are worried about them. They are our fellow South Africans, and we do not want them to get lost," he says. "But we must also recognize that the South African nation cannot be held out for ransom." Sexwale is convinced that South Africans will give him and his party some time before demanding their liberation dividend. "Patience is the culture of the people of this country. They were patient with their own oppression, and I think that bodes well for us."

—April Oliver

U R B A N A M E R I C A

Dead wrong

W

The press is more interested in exploiting inner-city stereotypes than addressing the real issues of urban crime.

By Salim Muwakkil
CHICAGO

alking alongside a procession of marchers protesting youth violence, "Brother Robert" of the Nation of Islam (NOI) is doing a brisk business selling copies of *The Final Call*, the group's house organ. The cover headline reads "Saving the family," and it coincides perfectly with the sentiments of most of the marchers. Many of them are chanting platitudes like "it takes a whole village to raise a child," and "save the children," as they protest two recent slayings here that shocked the entire nation.

Robert Sandifer, an 11-year-old who allegedly murdered a 14-year-old girl and was himself executed "gangland style," now joins 7-year-old Dantrell Davis, who was killed by a sniper's bullet two years ago, as yet another poster child of urban savagery. Sandifer, whose nickname was

"Yummy," was a slight, brown-skinned boy who looked even younger than his age. Nonetheless, he already had a long police record when witnesses identified him as the killer in the shooting death of 14-year-old Shavon Dean. According to police, the young Sandifer, a reputed street gang member, was gunning for a member of a rival gang when Dean walked into the line of fire.

The boy eluded police for three days. When finally found, he was lying dead in a pool of blood under a seedy railroad viaduct. He had been shot twice in the back of the head. Two teenage brothers have been charged with the slaying, and police say they are members of the same Black Disciples street gang that ordered Sandifer to shoot the gun that killed Dean. The gang members were afraid he would implicate them, police speculate.

"The people are beginning to see what the minister [NOI leader Louis Farrakhan] has been talking about," Brother Robert says as he changes the \$5 bill of a young customer. "This is genocide at work. You know that

black people have been driven insane by white America when 11-year-old children begin firing on other black children like it's a game."

Not everyone in this march—one of several around the city organized by the civil rights group Operation PUSH—shares Brother Robert's black nationalist ideology. But there is consensus on the severity of the situation. Fueled by the violence associated with the drug trade, Chicago is on course for a record murder rate this year and law enforcement officials seem overwhelmed by the problem.

Many of these marchers believe that opportunities for good-paying employment would easily offset the lure of gangs and the underground economy they control. But few expect help will come from Washington.

"The U.S. government will be even more right wing after the Republicans sweep through the mid-term elections," says marcher David Lewis. "If we don't mobilize ourselves to do the job of saving our own communities, then I'm afraid the job won't get done."

Like Lewis, many marchers have concluded that enlightened federal policy is a thing of the past, and thus they must look within the black community for strength. Racial polarization is being accelerated by right-wing pressures on both sides of the racial divide. The increasing acceptance among African-Americans of the NOI's reactionary nationalism is an indication of that rightward movement.

Cultural issues, such as the fractured state of the African-American family, have lost their taboo status and are among the primary concerns black organizers are raising these days. And since the left traditionally has ceded such issues to the conservative right, cultural concerns sometimes acquire a

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Young mourners
at the funeral of
11-year-old
Robert Sandifer.

reactionary tinge. But most experts agree that fractured families are the common elements in the life histories of children like Yummy.

The young Sandifer was well known in his Roseland community on Chicago's far South Side. Many residents, interviewed two weeks after his murder, characterized him almost uniformly as a "bad little boy." He already had been arrested for several felonies during his short life. Yummy's mother, Lorina Sandifer, is a 29-year-old mother of seven. She has been arrested more than 40 times, primarily for prostitution, and is by her own admission a crack addict. Before his third birthday, the boy was treated for scars and bruises reportedly inflicted by an abusive father.

The boy's tale of abuse, neglect and crime unfortunately is not unusual in urban America circa 1994—and it tells a larger story about deep problems facing the Roselands of this country. Although the boy's gang affiliation was a major element of the story, many observers believe the media's focus on gangs is misguided. They say this preoccupation with street gangs squanders an opportunity to convey the story's complexities and gain some understanding of the conditions that produced the life and times of Robert Sandifer.

"The gang aspect of this story was blown way out of proportion," says Dr. Carl Bell, president and CEO of the Community Mental Health Council, Inc. Bell has done extensive research on youth violence and is a nationally regarded expert on the subject. "I've seen stories suggesting that he shot into the crowd in order to be admitted to a gang. That's sensationalized, *Enquirer*-style, media bullshit.

Could you imagine how many killings there would be if gangs required murder for initiation? The whole idea is ridiculous."

But because of increasing commercial pressure from the tabloid media, Bell believes, the mainstream press is more inclined to opt for lurid coverage. "Another part of their motivation," says Bell, "is to feed the insatiable hunger that white Americans have for negative portrayals of black folks. This kind of coverage that emphasizes the absolute depravity of black inner-city life provides sustenance for their deep-seated racism."

The Sandifer saga certainly is the stuff of media melodrama—a kid murders a kid and is executed by other kids—but it also is situated within a context largely ignored by the press. A major feature of that context is the escalating poverty rate for black children, currently at more than 50 percent. Marian Wright Edelman, president and founder of the Children's Defense Fund, warns that black children face their worst crisis since slavery.

This crisis is a multifaceted one, born of complex causes. But much of the mainstream media seems to have settled on a formula that portrays inner cities as crime-ravaged environs characterized by children killing children and children having children. Or, as one critic colorfully put it, "a netherworld where the youth are either locked-up, knocked-up or glocked-up." ("Glock" is street slang for gun.) It's a standard portrayal that has further distanced inner-city issues from the concerns of mainstream America and that allows politicians to reap political benefits from demonizing social spending.

Despite all the misreporting, there have, in fact, been statistical increases in the rates of youth violence. According to figures from the National Center for Juvenile Justice, the homicide rate among 14- to 24-year-olds rose by 62 percent from 1986-1991; it jumped 124 percent among those 14-17. The proportion of murders committed by juveniles in 1992 was an unprecedented 9 percent.

Howard Snyder, director of systems research for the Center, told the *American Journalism Review* that "what juveniles are doing is getting more involved in murders, primarily because of the increased use of weapons."

In Chicago, for example, more than 5,900 guns have been seized from underage firearms owners so far this year, according to recent statistics from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF). That number accounts for roughly 27 percent of all handgun seizures in the city, according to police.

Despite such statistics, Snyder cautions against placing the blame for the increase in violent crime solely on the backs of youthful offenders. Just 19 percent of the rise in violent crimes between 1983 and 1992 can be attributed to juveniles, he says.

There is a general consensus among media analysts that crime coverage is charging the political atmosphere. At a recent conference on violence and the young, sponsored by the Casey Journalism Center for Children and Families at the University of Maryland's College of Journalism, several experts explored the media's apparent inability to get beyond superficialities and clichés.

Lawrence Sherman, professor of criminology for the Indianapolis Police Department, complained that intraracial violence in the black community receives less coverage than the rare cases of black-on-white violence. "What are the consequences of that in our perception of the American crime problem?" Sherman asked.

Alex Kotlowitz, former *Wall Street Journal* reporter and author of *There Are No Children Here*, a critically acclaimed book that chronicles the violence-scarred lives of a family living in Chicago's public housing, argues that journalists must learn to bridge "the very deep and wide chasm that separates the two Americas." Kotlowitz, who is white, suggests that reporters covering inner-city violence should practice more empathy, spend more time in the neighborhoods, put away their preconceptions before starting a story and put more effort into studying the histories of the communities they cover.

There are responsible ways for journalists to document the realities of inner-city life. The *Chicago Tribune*, for example, made an admirable attempt to take crime coverage to a new level with a year-long series titled "Killing Our Children." The series was precipitated by the sniping murder of 7-year-old Dantrell Davis and contained more than 200 stories and editorials, involving 75 reporters and 35 photographers. The project attempted to place youth violence into context by closely examining individual incidents.

According to Ann Marie Lipinski, the *Tribune's* deputy managing editor, the idea for the series was to explore a simple notion: "If a newspaper spent an entire year really getting behind each of these cases, what would be learned? Would it just sort of prove our assumptions about this violence, or would we learn something new?"

Lipinski says the project helped readers better understand the complex swirl of issues that provoke the high levels of crime and violence now plaguing inner-city America and that it "opened up a whole new vista in terms of reporting on these other issues."

Other publications also are experimenting with new efforts to render the realities of crime and violence in ways that educate rather than titillate. But they are struggling against decades of regressive tradition and racist assumptions. And even with the best intentions, the cultural blinders of the editors often obscure the facts.

"The real story that is coming out of the inner city these days is the prevalence of female cocaine addicts," argues Bell. "Crack has taken black women away from their children in ways that are historically unique."

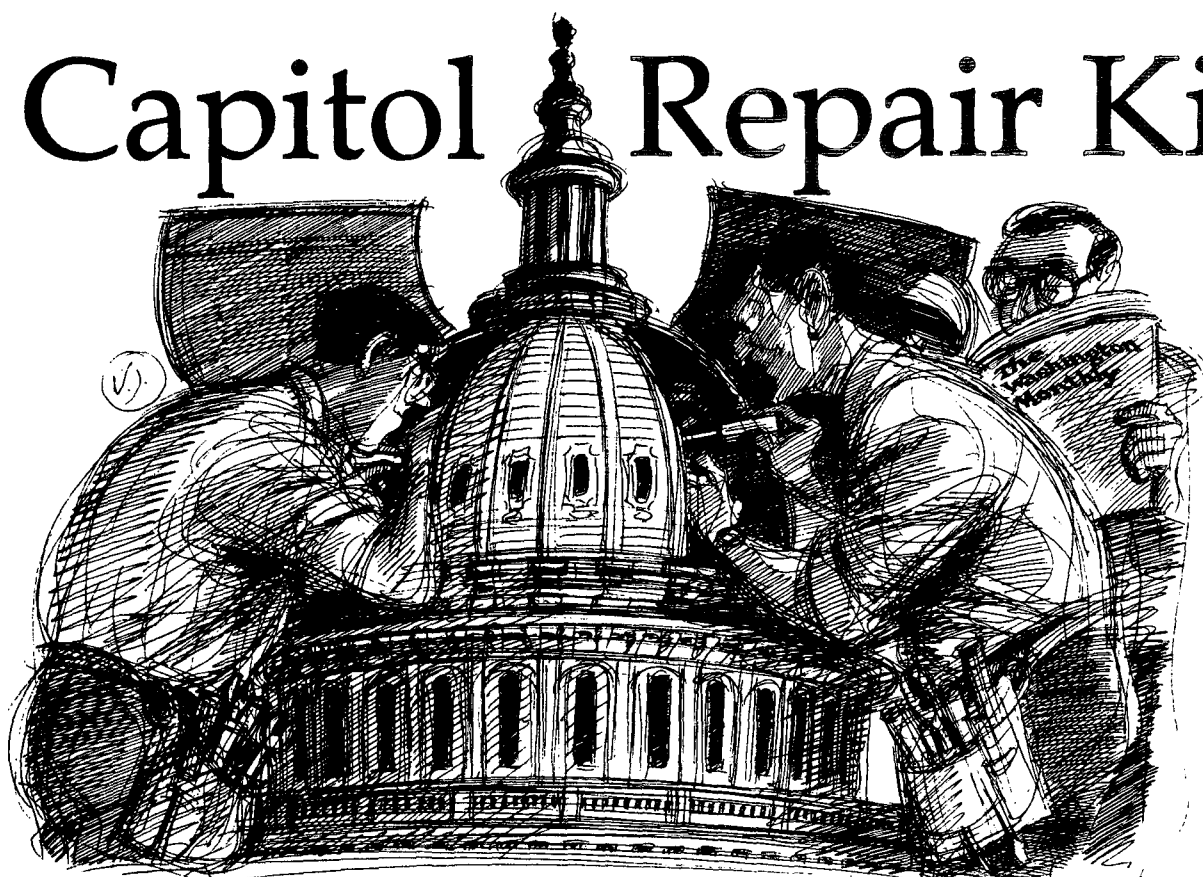
Bell believes that crack addiction is one of the major reasons for the escalating rates of child neglect and abuse. "I was born and raised in Chicago and I've worked closely in the city as a psychiatrist, and I've never seen nothing like this," he says.

Like a growing number of critics, Bell traces many of the current community problems to the ill-conceived "war on drugs" approach adopted by the Reagan and Bush administrations. "We've been Bush-wacked," Bell says. "The idea of locking people up in extraordinary numbers for something that should be considered an issue of public health has destabilized our communities, filled our jails past capacity and ruined millions of lives."

The Clinton administration's recently passed crime package only calls for more mandatory sentencing. With politicians and pundits more concerned about reinforcing stereotypes than addressing the real issues of the inner city, urban residents have been forced to go it alone. In Chicago, the Robert Sandifer tragedy has prompted a swirl of activity designed to address the problem of youth violence. PUSH, for instance, is encouraging groups of men to adopt a specific block and organize it around programs for youth. Community, civic and church organizations are also vowing to launch new efforts. Robert Warner, former executive director of a male mentoring group called "Project Image" and father of actor Malcolm Jamal Warner, urges a door-to-door approach. "We need more intensive grass-roots organizing," he says. "We need to confront the devils of crime and community dissolution eyeball-to-eyeball and make the commitment not to flinch."

As with the aftermath of the Dantrell Davis murder, the entire city of Chicago now seems united in outrage and ready to act. Two years after Davis' murder, however, it's clear that little has changed. Urban America can hardly afford any additional delays.

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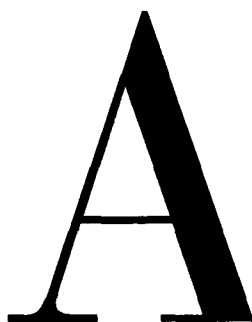
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THE PENTAGON

Peace is hell



*In the
post-Cold
War economy,
military
contractors
are protecting
profits while
sacrificing
workers.*

By Frank Kofsky

number of recent media reports on the impending merger of Lockheed and Martin Marietta come to the same conclusion. Military spending, the stories maintain, has been hacked to the bone. Thus, weapons-making companies, reeling from the cuts, reluctantly have been compelled to fire workers by the thousands.

Yet these assumptions are simply wrong. To begin with, the Clinton's administration's first military budget contains an *increase* of \$3 billion over what the Bush administration planned to funnel to the Pentagon in 1994. Moreover, the military budget is actually larger under Bill Clinton than it was when Cold War tensions were at their most intense. In 1980, for example, when the Soviet Union had just invaded Afghanistan, Pen-

tagon spending amounted to \$252 billion in today's dollars. In 1994, Pentagon expenditures will, courtesy of the Clinton administration, total \$11 billion more than that figure.

But if the nation's military budget has not been slashed, why have so many military-sector workers been tossed on the scrap heap? The answer: the military industry is run according to the principle of protecting profits over people. Any pain felt from adjustments in the post-Cold War military industry is felt by workers while employers go unscathed.

In 1990, for example, the Pentagon was reportedly considering a \$1 billion bailout of the largest defense contractor in the country, McDonnell Douglas. (The proposed bailout, in the form of advance payments on work yet to be done, never came about.) This is the same McDonnell Douglas whose profits just one year later reached a record \$423 million, up 38 percent from the previous year, even as it laid off 22,000 employees. And it's the same company whose chairman, John F. McDonnell, took home

\$850,753 in salary and bonuses in 1991—a 47 percent increase from 1990.

Likewise, General Dynamics, the nation's second-largest weapons producer, enjoyed profits of \$505 million in 1991 while eliminating some 19,600 jobs; the next year, second-quarter profits leapt more than sevenfold, from \$57 million to \$435 million, as the company simultaneously demolished another 2,200 jobs. Then there's Northrop, manufacturer of the B-2 (Stealth) bomber. First-quarter revenues in 1992 were up 36 percent over those of 1991; first-quarter employment was lower by 3,600 positions: 100 people out of work for every 1 percent increase in profits.

The Clinton administration has only encouraged such trends. This year, Congress discovered what *Newsday* describes as a "secret Pentagon decision to pay military contractors billions of dollars to underwrite expenses connected with acquisitions and mergers." The plan gives certain arms-making companies rebate money for buying up their competitors—a notion that some critics have jeered as "a Clinton administration program to play 'fairy god-mother' to major defense companies awash in profits."

Administration officials insist that this program saves the public money through more efficient production methods. Nonetheless, even a few members of the House Armed Services Committee—a body not normally known for challenging the armaments industry—argue that the policy represents a potential windfall for military contractors as well as an incentive for hostile corporate takeovers and worker layoffs, with taxpayers picking up some of the bill.

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In the most notable case thus far, the Department of Defense gave some \$60 million to Martin Marietta to fund its purchase of a General Dynamics subsidiary in San Diego—and was about to reward that company with another \$170 million when Congress caught wind of the deal.

“Under the plan,” *Newsday* reveals, Martin Marietta “would get \$330 million from the Pentagon to cover expenses related to the purchase of the former subsidiary of General Dynamics and also a purchase of a General Electric subsidiary.” Perhaps not surprisingly, the two officials who approved the details of this arrangement—Secretary of Defense William Perry and his deputy, John Deutch—were both Martin Marietta employees before joining the Clinton administration.

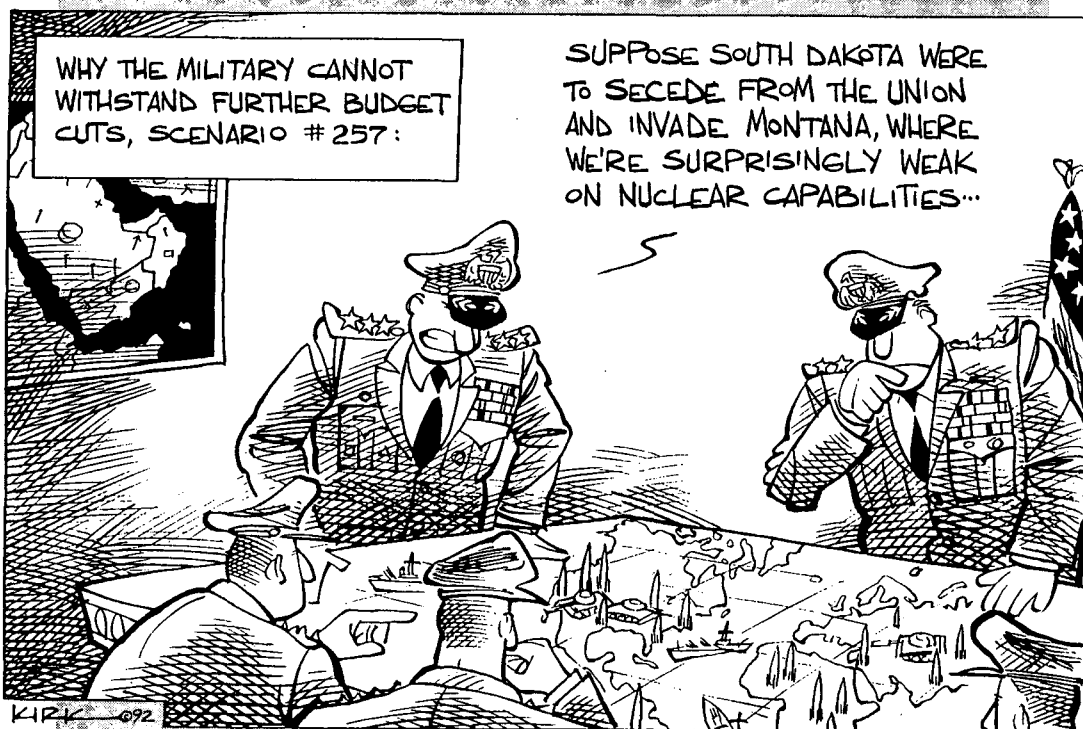
What makes this Pentagon program even more questionable is the fact that, as one analyst explained to *Newsday*’s Patrick J. Sloyan, “Defense is still a profitable business, and defense stocks are still quite high.”

Despite all the rhetoric about “conversion” of arms makers to civilian production, such companies have never been able to compete in a civilian economy. During the ’40s, for example, the most technologically advanced weapons were those rolling off the assembly lines of the aircraft industry. In doing research for my book *Harry S. Truman and the War Scare of 1948*, I investigated attempts by the aircraft industry to convert to peacetime

production after World War II. (See *In These Times*, August 8.) Whether it was Douglas Aircraft’s aluminum rowboats, Northrop Aviation’s motor scooters or even Ryan Aeronautical’s stainless-steel caskets, without exception these ventures ended in utter failure.

After feeding at the federal trough for an additional half-century, weapons makers are even less likely to be successful at conversion than they were in the ’40s—and the executives who direct the industry know it. As William A. Anders, chairman and chief executive officer of General Dynamics, explained at the 1991 *Defense Week* convention, studies conducted for his company “showed an economic failure rate of 80 percent for acquisitions outside of defense by defense contractors. This isn’t surprising. Defense industry management teams generally have little commercial experience or market savvy. Most have been ‘cost plus’ [guaranteed profit] and ‘mil spec’ [military specifications] trained. In short, most don’t bring a competitive advantage to non-defense business. Frankly, sword makers don’t make good and affordable plowshares.”

Forty-five years ago, when it became evident that the airplane makers were teetering on the brink of bankruptcy, Harry Truman and his key officials concocted the war scare of 1948 that gave them a new lease on life. By the time the smoke cleared and the mirrors were removed, the administration had managed not only to boost overall Pentagon spending by nearly 30 percent but to increase



else, the experiences of the last few years should have begun to make it apparent that even if we bury the Pentagon in dollars from now unto eternity, there is no guarantee that the weapons makers will create one additional job—or, for that matter, shrink from one additional layoff—as a result.

The question now is how much longer it will take before that lesson finally sinks in. ◀

Frank Kofsky is a professor of history at California State University, Sacramento. He is the author of *Harry S. Truman and the War Scare of 1948: A Successful*

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funds for procurement of military aircraft by an astonishing 60 percent. What Ronald Reagan required three years to accomplish, Truman pulled off in as many weeks.

There are, of course, some significant differences between the current climate and that of 1948. For one thing, by now we have become so accustomed to the notion that our tax dollars should be dedicated to propping up uncompetitive armaments firms through a series of never-ending giveaways that we don't even demand that Clinton present us with a plausible foe; any ragtag excuse of an enemy will do.

Thus, where Truman & Co. in 1948 felt compelled to resort to the fiction that a huge and immediate U.S. military buildup was necessary to prevent the Soviets from launching World War III, Clinton and his military advisers take the public's acquiescence for granted and barely bother to justify a \$263 billion Pentagon budget. When asked what necessitates military spending on such a lavish scale, Clinton officials respond vaguely that the U.S. experience with Somalia, Bosnia and North Korea dictates that the administration must maintain a strong military presence abroad.

But such justifications may finally be wearing thin. Four decades ago it was still possible to believe that, in the words of a 1950 issue of *Business Week*, military spending would prevent a "rising level of unemployment here at home," and that such spending was nothing less than a "magic formula for almost endless good times," as *U.S. News & World Report* claimed the same year. By 1994, perhaps we have begun to suspect otherwise. If nothing

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Rush Limbaugh, whose political spiels are broadcast on over 625 radio and 220 TV stations nationwide, is often called "provocative." It would be more accurate to call him "wrong." And that's not just a matter of opinion. It's a matter of fact. Rush Limbaugh's groundless assertions on issues of public importance include:

- "most Canadian physicians" come to the U.S. when in need of surgery;
- nicotine's addictiveness "has not been proven";
- volcanoes do more harm to the ozone layer than man-made chemicals;
- condom users have a one-in-five AIDS risk;
- "the poorest people in America are better off than the mainstream of families in Europe";
- "we have more acreage of forestland in the United States today than we did at the time the Constitution was written";
- Nixon would have defeated Kennedy in 1960 if "only 4,000 votes" had "gone another way in Chicago";
- "not one indictment" resulted from Lawrence Walsh's Iran-Contra investigation.

All of these assertions, and many more, are plain wrong. It's all documented in a new report, "Limbaugh's Reign of Error," in the magazine *EXTRA!*

Yet Rush Limbaugh seldom, if ever, corrects his factual errors on the air — errors that mislead public opinion, pollute public policy debate, jeopardize public health and, in the case of one rumor, reportedly caused a drop in the stock market. After *EXTRA!* published its compilation of Limbaugh's fallacies, he repeatedly concocted new canards in attempts to defend his original errors.

Given the millions of people who believe Limbaugh, it's no laughing matter that his unchallenged political sermons are packed with falsehoods.

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G E R M A N Y

Greenhorns no longer

*The
Green Party
is finally
getting the
knack of
big-time
politics.*

By Paul Hockenos
BERLIN

The eastbound metro comes to a heavy, screeching halt on its elevated platform, rattling the little theater directly below its tracks. Seated at a panel on the stage, Green Party parliamentary candidate Christian Ströbele pauses as the engine settles into its end station in the Kreuzberg district, home of Berlin's artsy counterculture. "On October 17, the day following elections," continues Ströbele with a hint of irony in his voice, "we will sit down with [Social Democrat leader Rudolf] Scharping to discuss the participation of the Greens in the new government."

In the privacy of his law office, even party founder Ströbele admits the chances are slim that a coalition between the center-left

Social Democrats and the Greens—known here as a red-green coalition—will topple Chancellor Helmut Kohl's conservative government in the October 16 national elections. The ruling Christian Democrats, in power now for 12 years, stand solidly ahead of the opposition Social Democrats in every opinion poll.

That wasn't the case as recently as this spring. The Social Democrats, buoyed by the depressed economy and record postwar unemployment, led their rivals by nearly 20 percentage points. Had elections been held then, the combined red-green vote would have sufficed to build a coalition government. But Germany's sluggish economy is now showing signs of life, and the Social Democrats—who've run a cautious, middle-of-the-road campaign—have failed to inspire voters.

Still, as balloting nears, the combined numbers of the Social Democrats and the Greens trail those of the Christian Democrats and their beleaguered junior part-

ners, the Free Democrats, by only 4 or 5 percent. The upcoming elections mark the first time that a credible left-wing alternative to the postwar political status quo—namely, governing configurations involving the Christian Democrats, the Social Democrats or the Free Democrats—has been in the cards at all.

The Greens, who in 1990 failed to muster the 5 percent share of the national vote necessary to enter parliament, look almost certain to make it this time. Surveys show the Greens and their partners, Coalition 90—a party comprised of Communist Party opponents from the former East Germany—with about 7 percent of the vote. Moreover, during the past four years, red-green state governments in Hessen, Lower Saxony and Brandenburg functioned well enough to make the Greens a credible coalition partner for the Social Democrats on the federal level. But the Social Democrats, rather than advertise a ruling pact with the Greens as their goal, or nominate a candidate who presided over a red-green state, such as Lower Saxony Premier Gerhard Schröder, opted for an uninspiring centrist in Scharping and vague, noncommittal campaign themes of "security" and "continuity."

The Greens/Coalition 90, on the other hand, openly tout a red-green government as the means to setting an innovative reform project in motion. Today, with their eye on power, the Greens are no longer the protest party that they were in the '80s. The long-running fight between party



German Chancellor Helmut Kohl pragmatists and grass-roots “fundamentalists” is over, with the former now clearly at the helm. Since the 1990 election debacle, the party has taken great strides to shape up its internal structures, moderate its image and replace its high-handed moral appeals with concrete policy proposals.

Behind the Greens’ metamorphosis is the simple conviction that they can accomplish more in power than in opposition. Although tempestuous at the best of times, the red-green state coalitions proved that the Greens were capable of working within the system, and making a real impact in the areas of transportation, environment and energy. In Hessen, Environment Minister Joschka Fischer succeeded in shutting down Germany’s single plutonium reprocessing plant. In Lower Saxony, the Greens pressured the SPD to back unique laws curbing state surveillance activities.

At the same time, there’s been some heavy soul-searching within the party about its identity in the post-Cold War era. The collapse of the East bloc and the general crisis of the Western left forced many to rethink the viability of, as well as their commitment to, a democratic form of socialism in the 20th century. In their literature, the Greens now speak of a “social environmental market economy,” a formulation they certainly wouldn’t have used five years ago. “There are still many of us in the party who hope that one day we will

be able to talk of socialism again,” says Ströbele, “but today the disastrous legacy of the planned economies in Eastern Europe makes that virtually impossible.”

The Greens’ platform conspicuously lacks their traditional critique of Western imperialism, NATO and U.S. foreign policy. The party leadership refused to endorse a recent demonstration in Berlin protesting a German army parade through the Brandenburg Gate—the first such march since the end of World War II. Most Greens, however, still stick dogmatically to their pacifist convictions, even at the expense of a coherent foreign policy. The Bosnia question, for example, split the ranks badly, and in the end the party was unable to formulate a clear policy response to the conflict.

Unlike the major West German parties, the Greens didn’t extend their organization into eastern Germany after the wall fell, a move that would have failed miserably anyhow. The territory of the former East Germany simply doesn’t have the left-liberal political culture that developed during the student and peace movements in West Germany and now provides the Greens with their core support. Instead, they joined forces with the East German Coalition 90, a grouping of small civic movement parties that emerged from the former illegal opposition in the German Democratic Republic. The addition of the East German dissidents, few of whom would use the label “left” to describe their politics,

has also moderated the party's tone, as well as brought specific "East themes" onto the agenda.

The merger has not been without difficulties. Coalition 90 candidate Gerd Poppe notes that with the exception of people like Ströbele and Petra Kelly, many Greens before 1989 harbored a reserved and sometimes outspoken sympathy for the communist regime. "We come from very different traditions," says the former dissident. "It's taken a long time for us to reconcile our major differences, and still very fundamental problems continue to surface."

Despite such new caution, the Greens/Coalition 90 program is still as progressive as that of any electorally viable left-wing party in Europe. Their top demand is a radical environmental tax that targets non-renewable energy and heavy energy users. The revenue would fund a far-reaching environmental jobs and cleanup program. The Greens also advocate an immediate shutdown of all nuclear power plants, a 30-hour workweek, the dismantlement of the domestic security apparatus and a ban on automobiles in inner cities.

Theoretically, a red-green government in Germany still has an outside shot. Yet it appears most likely that neither of the major parties will take enough of the vote to gain an absolute majority, even together with one of the smaller parties. In the end, the Social Democrats and the Christian Democrats may have to join forces in a Grand Coalition, which would mean little change in the policies of the last decade, a tiny left-wing

opposition in the Bundestag, and perhaps, most dreadfully, four more years of Kohl as chancellor.

One factor that could have a decisive impact on the results is the reform communist party, the Party for Democratic Socialism (PDS). Like its counterparts elsewhere in the former East bloc, the reformed socialist party has made a startling comeback after its precipitous fall from power. In state elections throughout the former East Germany, the PDS has taken between 15 and 25 percent of the vote, and as much as 50 percent in some districts. Since its support is confined almost exclusively to the eastern states, the PDS only has a chance of winning Bundestag seats through a special election clause that exempts parties from the 5 percent minimum if they win more votes in at least three electoral districts.

The PDS is willing and eager to back a red-green government—and such support could enable even a minority red-green coalition to come to power. This is exactly what happened earlier this summer in Saxony-Anhalt, an eastern state, where the Social Democrats and the Greens/Coalition 90 formed a minority government that the PDS agreed to "tolerate." Cooperation with the PDS sparked an outcry across the country, most vociferously from the conservatives, who quickly brushed off some vintage Cold War anti-communism in an effort to discredit all left-wing parties as closet communists.

Neither the Social Democrats nor the Greens/Coalition

90 want to rely on the PDS for a stable government. Even though mainstream leftist parties in France, Denmark and elsewhere have called upon communist parties to support shaky ruling coalitions, in Germany the combination would almost certainly poison the political atmosphere, paralyzing the coalition before it even took office.

Given the malaise within the political establishment, the upsurge of racist violence, the environmental crisis, record unemployment and rampant dissatisfaction in the eastern states, the time would seem overripe for ousting the conservatives from power. It's primarily the Social Democrats' fault that Kohl's Christian Democrats are comfortably out in front, and that a red-green coalition lacks popular support.

Instead of presenting the red-green idea as a positive, constructive alternative, the Social Democrats opted for a bland, conservative strategy of "winning back the middle" dissatisfied with the stagnant economy. Now that the economy is reviving, that middle sees no reason to abandon the Christian Democrats.



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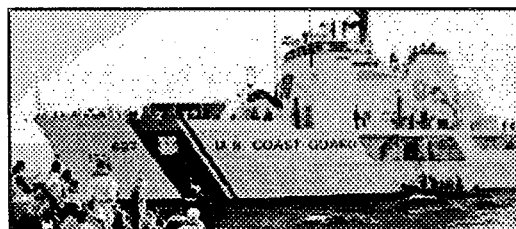


In 1961 the U.S. initiated a trade and travel embargo against Cuba. Over three decades later the Cold War is over but Bill Clinton has decided to instigate a complete embargo and deny access to U.S. ports for foreign companies doing business with Cuba. This escalating economic warfare has no legal precedent or moral justification. Even the UN has decried the American policy as an international crime.

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The embargo's singular objective, according to Clinton, is to encourage Cuba's democratization. This overused explanation rings increasingly hollow as America's record of lending both military and economic support to anti-democratic governments in Iran, China and Kuwait continues to grow. The proposed embargo only assists anti-Castro interests in efforts to overthrow the government; an initiative never sanctioned by the world community or the UN.

Many Americans do not realize the hardship the embargo causes Cubans, seeing only the result as thousands risk life attempting to escape and end up as refugees at Guantanamo. Now, in a cynical gesture, the U.S. is offering to take in 20,000 refugees, not nearly enough to ease the problem.



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ECONOMICS

Unhappy birthday

*After 50 years,
it's time for the
World Bank
to change
course.*

By David Moberg

As the World Bank celebrates its 50th anniversary in Madrid this month, a growing chorus of critics from both rich and poor countries will be sending a sour birthday message: 50 years is enough. The World Bank, they say, has not only failed to reduce world poverty through its development loans; the policies it pursues—in tandem with sister agencies like the International Monetary Fund (IMF)—have increased global poverty and inequality, trampled democracy and the rights of the powerless, and laid waste to the environment.

Established to help Europe rebuild after World War II, the Bank actually played a tiny role there. Much of Europe's reconstruction was funded

through Marshall Plan programs, which promoted economic expansion and employment with grants and low-interest aid. Despite free-market rhetoric, the Marshall Plan gave European governments wide latitude in shaping national economic policies, often along social democratic lines.

By contrast, the Bank and the IMF have—especially over the past two decades—pursued policies that have saddled poor countries with enormous amounts of foreign debt and deflated their economies in the name of free-market discipline. At the same time that the Bank has advocated austerity for the world's poor, it has supported a slew of development boondoggles that have enriched corrupt Third World elites while despoiling the environment.

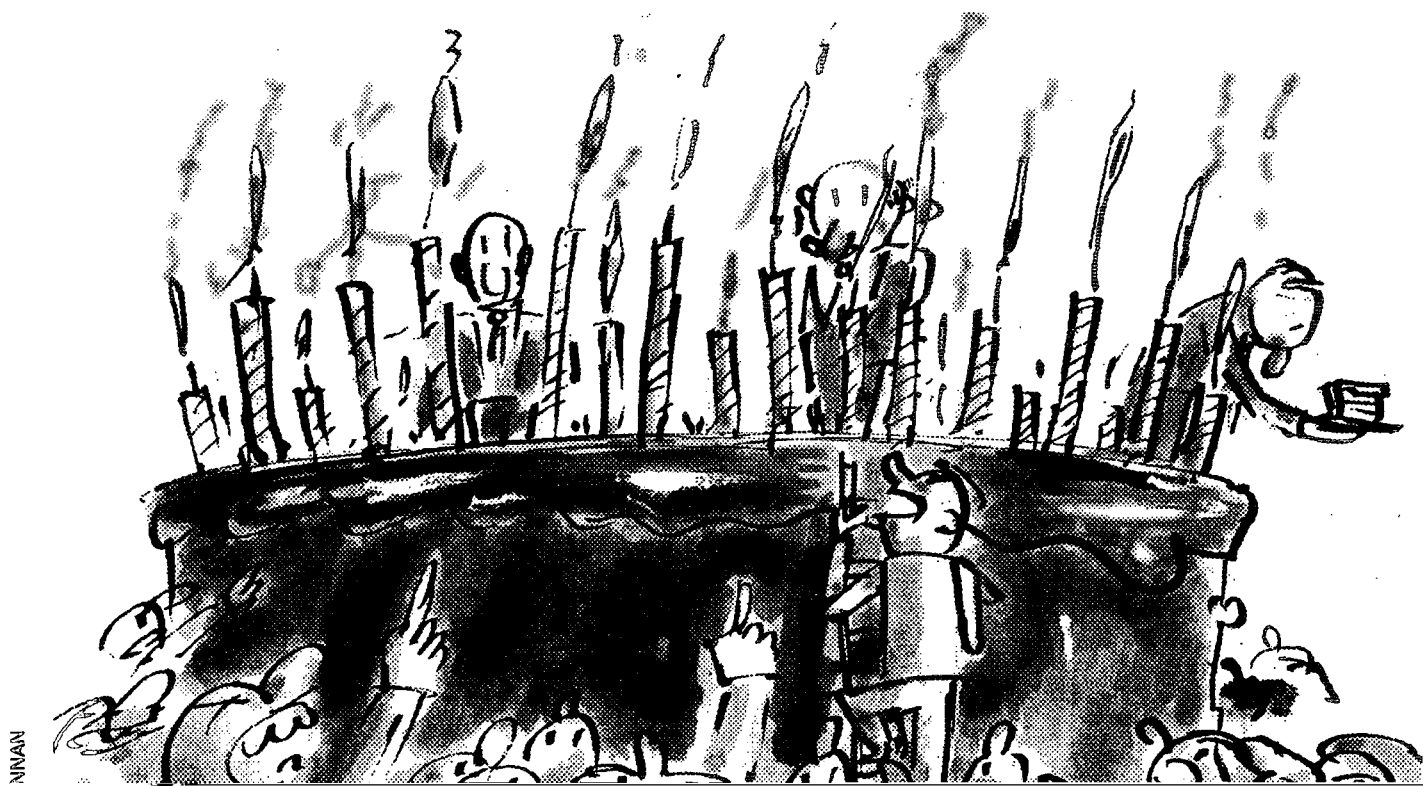
The Bank itself has always been an elite institution: its presidents have come mainly from the ranks of corporate America. Despite its talk about alleviating poverty, the Bank has served primarily as an instrument of transnational financial interests. But it is important to remember—especially when contemplating possible

reforms—that it has one other major constituency: the elites in many poorer countries.

Ostensibly a non-political technocracy, the World Bank has always been political. It was an important instrument of Cold War anti-communist policies. It has also had a sordid record of underwriting dictators—from Brazil, where the Bank would not lend to the democratically elected leftist government of João Goulart but promptly aided the generals who ousted him in 1964, to Romania, where renegade communist Nicolae Ceausescu was one of the Bank's biggest borrowers from 1974 to 1982.

The Bank has also been extremely secretive, drawing up vast plans for countries without releasing any information to their citizens. In most decisions, the Bank has been accountable to virtually no one—leaving Bank projects notoriously susceptible to fraud and waste. Two years ago an internal review concluded that more than 35 percent of World Bank projects were financial failures.

During its first 25 years, Bank leaders complained that there were few projects worthy of funding. But Robert McNamara, Kennedy's defense secretary and architect of the escalation in Vietnam, aggressively expanded Bank lending during his tenure as president from 1968 to 1981. McNamara's mission seemed unimpeachable: more growth, more focus on alleviating poverty, more attention to the environment. But in practice the Bank produced virtually the opposite results.



more exports—whether low-wage manufactured goods or agricultural commodities. When the agro-export strategy succeeds, it usually benefits big landowners—and hurts the environment with chemical use, extensive monoculture and deforestation. But the World Bank's overpromotion of exports encouraged gluts in world markets and led to extreme price depressions. Especially in Latin America and Africa, the poor have gotten even poorer over the past decade, even during periods of relatively robust economic growth.

During the '80s there were sharp declines in per capita income in three-fourths of the countries that were subjected to World Bank/IMF structural adjustment plans, according to the United Nations Children's Fund. At the same time, the rich in those nations have often prospered; income inequality has increased sharply—even in countries such as Ghana, Costa Rica and Mexico, which are often cited as World Bank successes.

By some calculations the Bank may be shifting capital from less-developed countries to the developed world. But because structural adjustment plans depress debtor country economies—leaving them too poor to increase imports—First World workers are also hurt by World Bank policies. In May, Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen claimed, without substantiation, that World Bank/IMF policies increase U.S. exports by \$5 billion a year, creating 100,000 jobs in this country. But a study by John Cavanagh, Sarah Anderson and Jill Pike of the Institute for Policy Studies estimates that the United States lost about 20,500 jobs a year in the '80s because most recipients of World Bank/IMF loans actually *reduced* their imports of U.S. goods.

Recently, the Bank has come under increasing attack by critics from both the right—who object to any government foreign aid or public lending—and the left. In Congress an odd alliance of anti-aid Republicans and liberal Democrats has begun to place conditions on U.S. funding to the Bank. The Bank has made rhetorical concessions to the critics, who argue in turn that there has been no meaningful change in real policy.

Left critics agree that the Bank needs to be more open and democratic, involving citizens—especially the poor—of borrowing countries in formulation of development strategies. They want smaller projects with more environmental foresight and closer monitoring of long-term results. They want the IMF and Bank officials to stop setting public policy for debtor countries and to agree to a dramatic write-off of debt for the poorest countries—a move that would accomplish more than additional loans.

Democratization of the World Bank would be a great step forward, but it is incredibly ambitious. The Bank, after all, is the handmaiden of international financial and governmental elites, as well as the ideological progeny of mainstream free market economics. Effectively democratizing the Bank's operations means not only challenging the dominance of both transnational corporations and banks but also, in most cases, the government elites in both debtor and

lender countries.

But simply pressing for democratization of the Bank is not enough. Many critics, especially among environmentalists, are advocates of small-scale, decentralized projects, which in most cases would be far superior to what the Bank has previously funded. But the critics do not offer a coherent alternative for dramatic development on a national scale. In many cases, such as in Bruce Rich's fascinating new book, *Mortgaging the Earth: The World Bank, Environmental Impoverishment, and the Crisis of Development*, environmental critics question the very idea of growth. (See *In These Times*, September 19.) Some, such as former World Bank economist Herman Daly, think development agencies should shift their focus altogether—from promoting Third World growth to constraining growth in the First World.

Ultimately the debate should not be about growth or no-growth but rather the quality of life for everyone on the planet. After all, growth of some type is fine: who could quibble with increased use of solar energy? But growth is not enough: too often growth in the past decade has benefited primarily the rich.

Fifty years of the World Bank and the IMF have brought the poorest billion or so people on our planet neither economic growth nor any non-material improvements in the quality of their lives. Of course, this was not an inevitable outcome of the World Bank's creation. At the time of the Bretton Woods conference in 1944, when the World Bank and IMF were established, economist John Maynard Keynes argued for the creation of a tax on countries that compile trade surpluses. The tax, Keynes said, could be used to aid growth in countries running trade deficits—a plan for income redistribution that makes even more sense today.

Redistribution won't be popular with rich elites in the poor countries or with anyone in the rich countries, especially in the United States. But in the wake of NAFTA's passage—as U.S. jobs go to low-wage Mexican workers—many Americans are beginning to understand how intimately their fortunes are tied to the well-being of the world's poor. Pinched by the economics of global competition, they are realizing how great a stake even the citizens of the world's most powerful economy have in reversing 50 years of failure in meeting the needs of the world's poor. ◀

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R U S S I A

Nyet profit

*The collapse
of a prominent
investment firm
is giving
Russians a
crash course
in capitalism.*

By Fred Weir
MOSCOW

T

hree times this summer, forlorn crowds gathered outside the shuttered steel doors of Moscow investment firms that are likely never to open again. People dragged together by common ruin stood in fear and hope, praying someone would say it wasn't true. Many wept, others made angry speeches, some seemed too stunned to react.

"I've been robbed over and over again. First my savings were wiped out by inflation, and now this," said Vera Sokolova, a 67-year-old pensioner. "MMM was my last hope for a normal life."

Last spring Sokolova staked and lost about \$300, everything she had, on promises of big dividends from MMM, a giant investment firm whose advertising slogan was

"MMM—Nyet Probleyem."

But the company turned out to have massive problems. After collecting an unknown volume of money from an estimated 10 million small investors, MMM suddenly devalued its shares by over 99 percent, from 125,000 rubles (\$60) to 900 rubles (45 cents), and closed its 70 Moscow offices in late July.

The crash came after the Russian government took action against MMM. Following a special cabinet meeting, the State Anti-Trust Committee took the extraordinary step of charging publicly that MMM was a pure pyramid scheme, that it had never made a single legitimate investment and that it had probably already transferred a big part of its shareholders' money to private overseas bank accounts. When the dust settled, millions of ordinary Russians had lost their shirts and MMM's charismatic founder-director, Sergei Mavrodi, was in prison facing a relatively minor charge of tax evasion.

A few weeks later the House of Selenga, a huge Siberia-based financial organization, closed down after being caught trying to illegally transport several million dollars in cash. In late August the Tibet Concern, an investment bank with 600,000 small shareholders, slammed its doors after five of its top executives and most of its money disappeared.

The government—which stood by indifferently for months while those companies built their fraudulent empires—has so far offered little more than paternal sermons in response to the rage of the victims. In his only public comment on the scandal, President Boris Yeltsin told journalists that the collapse of MMM was "a good lesson for our people. [Russians] should learn to be very careful about super-adventurous promises such as 1,000 percent profit."

Worthy advice. But if Russians have illusions about how capitalism operates, they can largely thank their own government for planting and nurturing that confusion in the first place.

"In the old days, one was supposed to be a model worker and a communist. That's what they taught us," said Sergei Artumov, a 27-year-old machinist who lost 2 million rubles (about \$1,000) in the MMM fiasco. "Now it's right to be an investor. I wasn't doing something crazy—I was doing what was expected."

Until recently, officials were hailing Russia's booming new securities market and citing it as evidence of communism's final retreat. "The Russian economy is starting to take off from the springboard of privatization," Deputy Premier Anatoly Chubais said at a press conference in June. "The people have embraced new ways, and we can

expect an explosion of investment" in the future. As a result of economic reforms over the past two years, some 144 million Russians have become shareholders. "That's more than even the United States," Chubais crowed.

Though the Russian government isn't likely to admit it now, MMM merely moved with that mood, clothed the hope in convincing garb and brought the dream of prosperity through share-ownership home to average Russians. In a series of brilliant television commercials, created by Kazakh film director Bakhyt Kilibayev and aired constantly on every national TV network, MMM compellingly introduced Russians to their new capitalist selves: the fictitious Golubkov family.

The central figure in those commercials was Lyonya Golubkov, a jovial, vodka-swilling Fred Flintstonov, who operates an excavator at a state construction firm and dreams of doing better for himself. His wife Rita is sweet, demure and domestic—but utterly serious about acquiring some of the good things in life.

When the first set of commercials aired last January, Lyonya and Rita had just begun investing in MMM. Together they drew up a wish-list of what they would buy each month using dividends from their shares. First, a pair of new boots for Rita, next a fur coat, then new furniture for their tiny flat. Then, maybe, a new house.

For months, MMM delivered. Its share price marched ever upward, from 1,600 rubles in February to a staggering 125,000 rubles just before the crash. And the Golubkovs prospered with it. They were every Russian family—but unlike most, they were managing to beat the national crisis, solve their problems, climb out of the muck. Rita got her fur coat, but instead of new furniture Lyonya bought himself a trip to the United States, where he rooted for Russia's World Cup soccer team, praised Russian vodka

and women, and admired America's proliferation of small businesses.

By spring, the rush to buy MMM shares became a flood-tide.

Lyonya did his part to educate his fellow Russians in the new free enterprise ethic, too. In one memorable spot, run interminably on state TV, he tussled over MMM's central ideological problem with his unreconstructed, Soviet-minded brother Ivan.

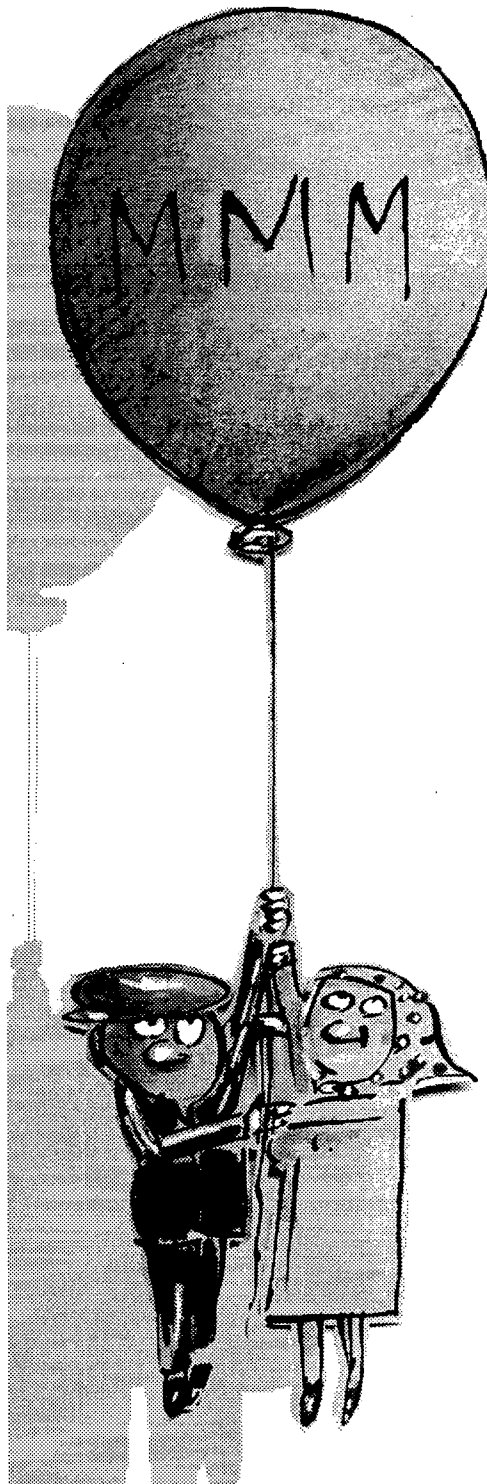
"Lyonya, you're a parasite," Ivan charges, stabbing an envious finger and pouring himself a glass of vodka. "Have you forgotten that our parents taught us to work honestly and never to speculate?"

"Not at all," Lyonya responds. "Do I not earn honest money operating my excavator?" That money, invested in MMM, helps to build new businesses and create new money. "I'm not a parasite, brother, I'm a partner," he concludes with a triumphant wink into the camera, raising his vodka glass.

The Golubkovs were so utterly convincing in their journey from Soviet rags to Western-style riches that it's hard not to wonder how they made out in the crash. It was tempting to look for Lyonya among the miserable, crushed faces around MMM's Moscow headquarters. Perhaps he was hard at work on his excavator, scheming anew. For millions of real-life Russian stock market losers there is nothing to do but take President Yeltsin's message to heart. And it is a tough one: the magical new world of easy money and good living has few vacancies for ordinary people.

For most working-class Russians, who saw MMM as a way to keep pace with the country's spiraling cost of living and maybe get a few nice things the way the Golubkovs were doing, it is not just a matter of changing their investment portfolios or making wiser decisions.

"Even if I wasn't forbidden as a public servant, I



wouldn't play the market today," says Natalia Fonareva, vice chair of the Russian government's Anti-Trust Committee and one of Russia's leading financial experts. "Everything that's worth owning has already been acquired. You have a better chance of finding fish in the Sahara than a profitable stock in our securities markets," she says.

What's left are shares in thousands of nearly bankrupt Soviet-era industries and, of course, dozens of seductive MMM-type scams. To its credit, the Russian government has finally shown signs of cracking down on the latter. But according to one economist, who asked not to be named, the reasons may have nothing to do with protecting aspiring little people from financial pirates.

"The Russian financial system is in deep crisis and on the verge of mass bankruptcies," the economist argues. As many as half of Russia's 2,200 commercial banks are fatally overextended, with major loans to near-bankrupt enterprises—many of which are likely to close in the next few months. Investment firms—of which there are about 600 operating in Russia—are in a similar position, he says. "Many of them own paper in worthless companies. A surprising number of them are just financial pyramids that are going to collapse. ... The Russian government hopes to take the pressure out slowly, to avoid a big crash all at once. That's why they're puncturing a few balloons, like MMM. Let's hope it works."

Fred Weir writes regularly from Russia for *In These Times*.

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I N T H E A R T S

Easy answers

**Quiz Show
is a product
of the same
mindset that
created the
'50s scandal
it examines.**

By Pat Dowell

There's a moment in *Quiz Show* that must have had an interesting echo for director Robert Redford. The character of Charles Van Doren, pressed on whether he participated in a rigged television quiz show, sighs and mutters something about how everything in life has come too easily to him. Twenty-one years ago, Redford said almost the same thing in one of his most popular movies, *The Way We Were*. Redford was playing a golden-boy writer, whose first autobiographical short story started just that way: "Everything came too easily to him."

Charles Van Doren is a role that Redford might have played two decades ago; maybe that accounts for the easy ride Van Doren gets in Redford's new movie about the scandal that rocked television in the late '50s. The live quiz show *Twenty-One*, a huge ratings

hit pitting intellectuals against one another, was revealed to be as rehearsed as a professional wrestling match.

Van Doren had been one of the show's biggest winners, beating out a Jewish grad student named Herbie Stempel who sweated too much and had bad teeth. Stempel had been considered a ratings loser by the producers, who ordered him to throw his match with Van Doren. He did, but was so enraged that he blew the whistle, turning Van Doren into the show's big loser when the scandal broke.

That's the story, but Redford and screenwriter Paul Attanasio see in it a parable of lost American innocence. Of course, this idea of the '50s as an age of naiveté is just so much hogwash—what's so pure about the age of McCarthy?—but the quiz show scandals do illuminate an interesting moment in America's budding postwar cynicism about the public discourse. It was part of our education in the art of lying, and Redford's movie tries and largely succeeds in raising many piercing questions about the conduct of

business in America. *Quiz Show* is a satisfyingly complex tale of complicity from top to bottom, although it's only the guys on the lower end of the food chain—the producer but not the corporate sponsor giving him orders—who will ultimately take the fall in the movie's bittersweet and unsentimental conclusion.

At the center of the story is Richard Goodwin, a congressional investigator. Paul Attanasio's shrewd screenplay places Goodwin (played by Rob Morrow with a distracting accent) in an uncomfortable position. He's a Jew who's been to Harvard and so he knows the soft-spoken anti-Semitism of the upper classes. Just the same, he's snowed by the Van Dorens, folks who call man of letters Edmund Wilson by his nickname, "Bunny." (A movie that hopes American filmgoers know who Wilson is—much less his nickname—is poignantly ambitious.) Goodwin can't believe Charlie would lie. Nonetheless, he checks Stempel's claim that the show always followed a Jewish champion with a Gentile who won bigger—and it's true. Goodwin is torn between the sweaty Jew and the gentle Gentile.

The casting is perfect. Fresh from his Aryan monster in *Schindler's List*, Ralph Fiennes turns the other cheek



Quiz Show
Directed by Robert Redford

as Charles Van Doren, a charming if weak man who really seems to be slumming when the producers scoop him up as *Twenty-One*'s "great white hope." Even they can't understand why he'd want to be on a quiz show.

John Turturro's Herbie Stempel is some kind of cockeyed masterpiece, a virtuoso example of this actor's ingenious overacting. Flailing through life a bundle of tics and nervous gestures, spinning like a top with bitterness, Turturro gets at the essential truth of Herbie's victimization, but never loses sight of the fact that Herbie carries it to Homeric extremes. He is an epic paranoid, and a kind of grotesque that's not far from the most unflattering stereotype of the New York Jew.

Ultimately, *Quiz Show* indulges in compromises derived from the search for a bigger audience—the same ambitions that drove *Twenty-One*. A recent article in the *New York Times* objected to the film's changes in chronology and its elevation of Goodwin into the man who uncovered the scandal, but these amount to no more than minor license of the sort to be found in most dramatized history.

Where the movie reproduces the corruption of *Twenty-One* is in its showcasing of Van Doren as a more attractive competitor than Stempel. *Quiz Show* manages to make a hero of the fair-haired WASP, who is fatally stung by the ethnic Stempel. Herbie's motives are obvious—he's poor and a nobody and bitter about it—and his situation is portrayed with a modicum of sympathy, which still does nothing to make him more palatable. Van Doren, on the other hand, is depicted with enormous fellow-feeling, as having been dragged into the scheme against his better judgment.

He initially rejects the offer of coaching by the producer and accedes to deception only when he's given—on the air, live, in front of millions—a question the producers previously discussed with him. Van Doren's fall is that of a tragic hero, a noble man with a flaw; Stempel's destruction is self-inflicted, too, but it's the toppling of a spoiler and a would-be gate-crasher. And when you think about it, isn't Van Doren, who had all the advantages of class and wealth, a more contemptible figure than the guy who had nothing to start with?

The movie compensates for this obvious paradox by giving Van Doren a highly individual motive: the chill of standing in the imposing shadow of his father, poet and professor Mark Van Doren (played by Paul Scofield with a delicate sense of unchallengeable authority). This was the son's way of shining on his own, and tweaking his father's magisterial



manner a bit, too. The old man is full of lofty sneers about television, but the whole family is impressed with the amount of money Charlie wins.

Goodwin tries to keep Van Doren out of the scandal, according to the movie, but fails when the networks urge the contestant to make a statement supporting the show. Charlie and his dad appear before Congress, and, of course, the upscale *mea culpa* is greeted with utmost respect—a nice touch of irony. What makes the '50s different from the '90s is that Van Doren *was* ruined by the scandal, instead of snagging a seven-figure book and mini-series contract.

Redford, not your flashiest director, is well suited to this basically earnest material, and to his credit, he directs with an unhurried, deliberate pace that brings out all the shades of gray in the story. Redford continues to be a fine handler of actors, too, as Fiennes and Turturro's performances amply demonstrate. But what may be most significant about *Quiz Show* is the way it proudly waves its virtue while choosing its hero the old-fashioned way, by his pedigree. It's an exceedingly well-wrought motion picture, and something of a cultural fraud.

TELEVISION

teenagesomething

*TV actually
looks
seriously at
the lives
of American
adolescents.*

By Scott McLemee

To be a teenager is a complex fate—not just because of sex, either. Adrift in that weird social space called high school, with its tribalism of clique and fashion, teenagers are subject constantly to the gaze of others. Some of us, of course, are spared the discipline of being cool. But marginality can exert other kinds of pressure, including levels of self-involvement that, in their intensity and thoroughness, can only be called existentialist. When Jean-Paul Sartre wrote, “Hell is other people,” he was an old fart in his 40s. Yet the sentiment is quintessential teenage—especially if the people in question are your parents. Little wonder that the chip on a teenager’s shoulder is seldom borne lightly.

On its surface, at least, the new ABC program *My So-Called Life* is all about that chip. Each episode

opens with a voice-over by Angela Chase, a 15-year-old character deep in the throes of an adolescent identity crisis—if that phrase isn’t too redundant. Her upper-middle-class family is so utterly non-dysfunctional as to be a little suffocating. And, in fact, Angela does feel suffocated. In the first episode, she mused: “Lately I can’t even look at my mother without wanting to stab her, repeatedly.”

Perhaps to keep from being bored to death, Angela takes up with a couple of new friends—Rayanne, a latchkey kid who drinks a bit; and Ricky, a black/Latino bisexual who joins them in the girls’ room to apply make-up. Her parents are less than thrilled by this development. Yet Angela herself is anything but wild, at least by post-*Ozzie and Harriet* standards: her rebellion largely takes the form of being sullen.

And Claire Danes, the 15-year-old actress who plays Angela, does a wonderfully expressive job portraying the various tones of sullen. She also brings a certain nuance to the several kinds of awkwardness and embarrassment the part requires. It is remarkable to see young, talented performers playing adolescents, something not often tried on television. (On a recent episode of *Beverly Hills, 90210*, someone asked Luke Perry’s character if he were old enough to buy liquor; evidence, I guess, that some scriptwriter has a cruel sense of humor.)

Life is produced by the people who created *thirtysomething*. It’s a show, therefore, with both high production values and a lot of cultural baggage. In contemporary American cultural politics, the expression “from the creators of *thirtysomething*” will inevitably prejudice much of the TV audience. It was a program some people loved, and many hated passionately. Indeed, you didn’t even have to watch the show to feel contempt for it: the term “thirtysomething” formed one end of a chain of signifiers, the other links of which included *The Big Chill*, the Reagan era, “the ’80s” and yuppies.

To be fair, *thirtysomething* itself didn’t endorse the whole Reagan *Weltanschauung*; in a way, the show was a reaction to the era. Its characters were not predatory or cynical. But if they resisted the mores of the day, it was by turning inward: they were narcissistic without being particularly avaricious. When they talked, the discussions were usually terse and subdued, and concerned deeply meaningfully personal experiences. Never before in the history of broadcasting have so many well-dressed people sighed so often, or so deeply, nor stared off into the distance with quite so much emotional intensity.

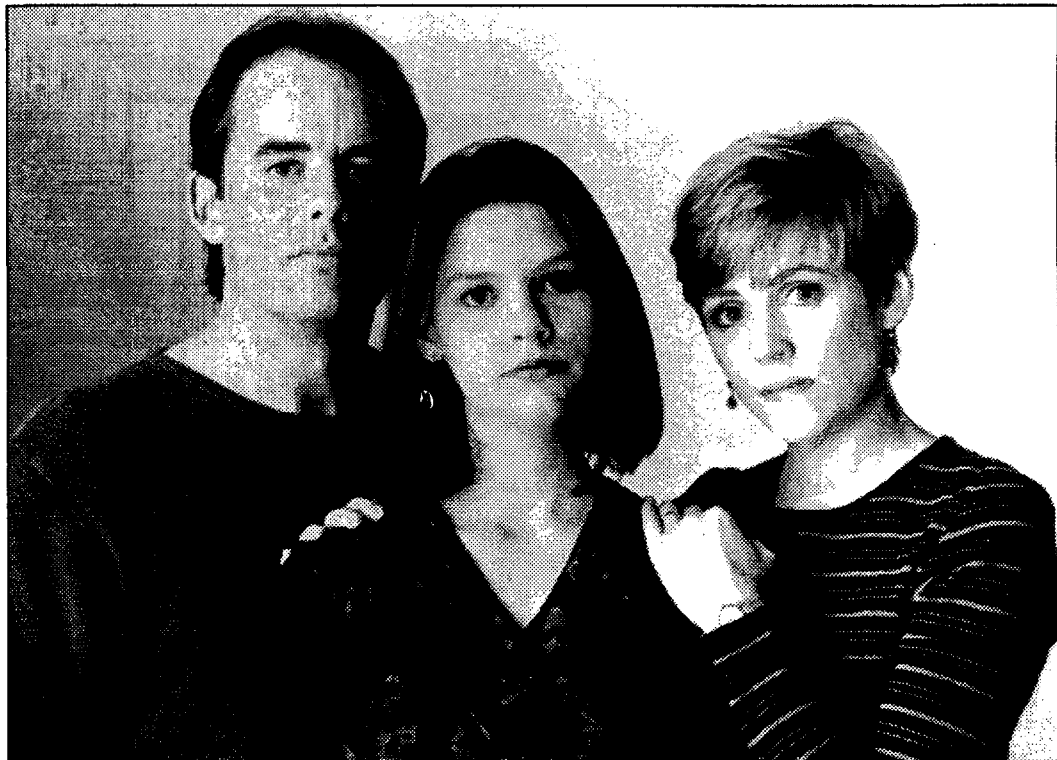
It would hardly be just to call *My So-Called Life* a replay of *thirtysomething* with teenagers. For one thing, people talk a lot more. And the distance between parents and kids

means the characters have a lot more to talk about (or argue over, as the case may be). Yet both *Life* and *thirtysomething* are set in something like a common social universe: a suburban and solidly middle-class world, occupied by emotionally sensitive people, perhaps a little worried about paying the bills but never faced with real want.

It looks very comfortable. What people worry about, for the most part, are their relationships with one another—and with themselves. As Angela puts it in the first episode: “It seems like you agreed to have a certain personality, or something. For no reason, just to make things easier for everyone. But when you think about it, I mean, how do you know it’s even you?” That is indeed a real problem. All of us face it eventually. But still, this sort of introspective musing is much easier to take, week after week, when it comes from a teenager than from an adult. And therein lies a considerable improvement over *thirtysomething*.

Yet Angela’s role as the embodiment of teenage identity leaves her friends, Rayanne and Ricky, at the margin of the show. Rayanne’s potential for serious substance abuse may yet come into the narrative. But it looks as if, in creating a black/Latino bisexual, the show is done with Ricky. It treats his sexuality as something he *is*—not as something he acts on, or talks about, or feels conflict over. These characters are among the most interesting aspects of *Life*. Yet one gets the uncomfortable feeling that they exist simply to teach Angela life lessons. Their secondary place reinforces the program’s strong tendency to linger within the confines of a securely middle-class perspective.

The best thing about *Life* is that it tries to take teenagers seriously—as seriously, even, as they take themselves. No doubt it will become a favorite show of quite a few kids. Yet in a sense, it is not really meant for them at all, but rather for their parents. What complicates *My So-Called Life* is how it uses Angela’s teenage angst as a foil for her parents’ stories—and, by extension, the stories of baby boomers in general. More and more, the story has expanded to incorporate the lives of Angela’s parents. The parallels between Angela’s confusion and their own are handled fairly subtly (as family dramas on the tube go). But the effect is to shift the program’s center of gravity from the teenage world to



the parents’-eye view.

As a result, there is less screen time for the kids’ world apart. And that is perhaps not accidental. The producers’ awareness of contemporary youth culture apparently comes from reading the Style section of a newspaper. There has been one stray reference to going to a rave, plus a ludicrous “grunge” band’s performance at a party. The show portrays teenage life almost entirely through Angela’s monologues—revealing the timeless essence of adolescent confusion, rather than the culture in which kids really move today, and through which they try to sort things out.

But however one-sided and middle-class the view of teenage life, the performances by the young actors and actresses are rewarding enough to compensate for the limits and blind spots. The clichés of boomer sensibility have already done enough damage to the cultural ecosystem—not least through spawning the equal but opposite counterclichés of Generation X. At times, *My So-Called Life* feels rather like an effort to colonize contemporary teenage (“Generation Y”) life, launched by people who insist on being Spokespersons for Their Generation. But who knows? Imperialists have a bad habit of bringing with them tools and ideas which the natives then use for their own purposes. In trying to mend the generation gap, *Life* may even be deepening it. The show may yet have a very complex fate indeed.

Scott McLemee writes regularly on television for *In These Times*.

A so-called family:
Tom Irwin, Claire Danes
and Bess Armstrong.

I N P R I N T

Mexico's uncivil society

By James North

This book explains better than any newspaper a central contradiction in contemporary Mexican society: why Mexico's ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) can continue to win millions of votes in presidential elections even though most Mexicans, including many who voted for the PRI, continue to regard the party as corrupt. *Mexican Lives* is a well-crafted and extraordinarily valuable look at Mexico today through the lives of 15 of its inhabitants—and, more broadly, an examination of how people in the Third World are adapting to the wrenching changes of today's global economy.

Judith Adler Hellman's subjects range from Mercedes Pacheco, who earns a few pesos selling fruit in a Mexico City marketplace, to Rubén Ergas, a successful textile manufacturer. Hellman, a professor of political science at York University in Toronto, also takes us into the countryside for a revealing look at the changes in Mexican agriculture, and to the U.S. border, where she introduces us to Maria del Rosario Valdez, who makes the 15- to 16-hour bus trip from Mexico City every week to buy used clothing she will resell.

Hellman shows us a Mexico in dramatic transition. After decades of growth, its industries protected by high tariff walls, the Mexican economy hit a roadblock of debt in the early '80s. Unsuccessful efforts to keep up with the repayments helped plunge the economy into a precipitous decline. And so, under considerable outside pressure, the ruling party abandoned protectionism and turned toward what Mexicans know as "neoliberalism" and what we call "free market reforms." Hellman's book shows in detail the changes such decisions have wrought on ordinary Mexicans. Miguel Ramírez, who sells imported electronic goods in an open-air market, cannot even consider a factory job—real wages have fallen so dramatically that his income would drop to a quarter of what it is now.

But Mexico's industrialists have also been left reeling. When Bernardo Navarro, a manufacturer, begins to talk about "the ineptitude of the government planners whose policies he holds responsible for the destruction of whole sectors of the Mexican electronics industry," Hellman writes,

"he struggles for the right words and switches to English, perhaps to distance himself from the emotions he feels."

Despite the misery, the ruling party has been able to hold onto its position largely through a politics of patronage that extends down to the smallest sidewalk vendor. What may look to the tourist like a haphazard collection of mini capitalists is actually a tightly organized network in which regular rent is paid to patrons—and anyone foolish enough to try to set up independently would rapidly be hustled off by the police.

Conchita Gómez's shantytown, for example, voted overwhelmingly for the opposition leader Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas in the 1988 presidential election. But then the ruling PRI began to respond in typical patron style—and President Salinas himself showed up to announce that the community would get real sewers. Gómez's neighbors do not like the PRI, but they also see it as a tool to get the services they so desperately need. It is likely that most of them voted for the PRI this time around.

The antidote to such clientelism is strong democratic organization—the development of a "civil society" in communities and workplaces. Hellman shows us some of those who have contributed the most to democratic reform. Gómez, for example, joined a neighborhood group after corrupt speculators sold her family a shantytown lot that the speculators did not, in fact, own. A remarkable married couple, the teachers Roberto Martínez and Alicia Pérez, emerged from the political turmoil of the Mexican universities in the '60s, and have continued to keep the faith, organizing democratic currents within the government-dominated teachers' union as they try to get by on declining salaries.

Yet the obstacles to real democratic renewal are serious. The people in this book are extraordinarily hard-working and resourceful, traveling great distances to carry out complicated income-earning schemes. But most of them work more or less alone, selling goods from meager stalls, cleaning houses and so on. The factories that once brought many of them together are closing; we will have to wait to see what kind of industries will emerge under the new system, what kinds of organization will arise in them and what kinds of alliances North Americans can build with them.

James North writes regularly on Third World politics for *In These Times*.



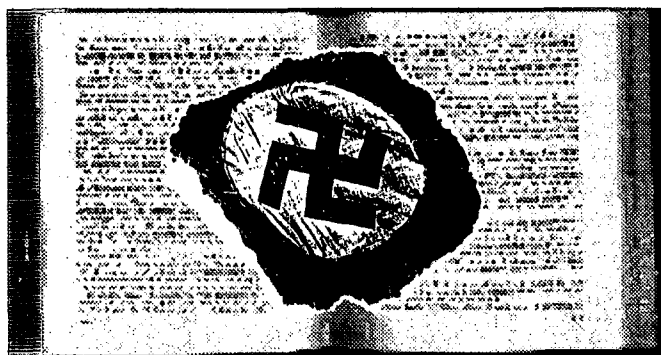
Mexican Lives

By Judith Adler Hellman

The New Press

244 pp., \$22.95

SPEED READING



Free to Hate: The Rise of the Right in Post-Communist Eastern Europe
By Paul Hockenos
Routledge
330 pp., \$16.95

A sense of euphoria overtook the Western Hemisphere in 1989 as communist regimes toppled across Eastern Europe and yesterday's dissidents became today's heads of state. Soviet bloc nations one by one professed their commitment to free elections and free enterprise, and the final triumph of Western liberal values seemed imminent. Five years later, Western onlookers seemed baffled by the emergence of fascistic political groups and ethnic cleansing campaigns reminiscent of Hitler's Final Solution.

In his book, *Free to Hate: The Rise of the Right in Post-Communist Eastern Europe*, Paul Hockenos demystifies the disturbing tide of nationalism and xenophobia that is sweeping East Germany, Hungary, Romania, the Czech Republic and Poland. His investigation of the current social, political and economic situation in Eastern Europe explores everything from neo-Nazi youth culture to the historical roots of regional ethnic rivalries.

Hockenos, *In These Times*' Eastern Europe correspondent, points out that the region's new nationalistic movements combine ethnic chauvinism and economic populism with the worst that communism had to offer. "As much as the citizens may have resented the party dictatorship and the Kafkaesque security apparatus," he writes, "many had come to rely upon the existence of a strong paternalistic force in their lives." In a great leap backward, Eastern Europe's ultra-conservative parties peddle a peculiar brand of late-20th-century anti-Semitism that "rejects the common Enlightenment values that underpin both [Bolshevism and liberalism]: their internationalism; their shared notions of equality, technological advancement and reason; [and] their emphasis on urban culture."

Hockenos intersperses his political analysis with reports of horrific acts of violence, gross violations of human rights and excerpts from fascist publications that speak for themselves. The lyrics of a Hungarian skinhead "oi band," for example, advocate the use of "machine guns, flamethrowers and atomic bombs to exterminate their racially inferior foes." But perhaps the most appalling development Hockenos describes is the West's abandonment of "the other Europe," despite enthusiastic promises of monetary aid and moral support.

The book, though, gives little indication of the actual scale of popular support for extreme right-wing agendas. Hockenos wavers between the impulse to evoke outrage and a desire to remain optimistic, leaving the reader with an impression of a rabidly fascistic Eastern Europe that can yet be redeemed through the benevolence of the West. Nevertheless, as an account of history in the making, *Free to Hate* (now available in an updated paperback edition) will both horrify and educate.

—Aushra Abouzeid

Reasonable Creatures: Essays on Women and Feminism
By Katha Pollitt
Alfred A. Knopf
186 pp., \$20

When, in the midst of the 1992 campaign, Dan Quayle launched his attack upon single mothers both fictional and real, he was careful to avoid dwelling too specifically on the complicated series of decisions, half-decisions and accidents that lead women to raise children on their own. For Quayle, single motherhood was simply a self-indulgent "lifestyle choice."

It's hard to respond to charges this vague, which is why such stern and meaningless rhetoric remains so popular with politicians—and which is why both Quayle and Bill Clinton have returned to the family values theme, both of them rehashing the old platitudes with all the sincerity and passion they and their speechwriters can muster.

One of the most intelligent and insightful responses to Quayle's bromide (and to the invocation of "family values" by politicians of all stripes) came from essayist and poet Katha Pollitt, a frequent contributor to *The Nation* and *The New Yorker* and one of the country's most provocative writers on feminist issues. Her essay—included in her new collection *Reasonable Creatures*—moved quickly from the realm of platitudes to a careful and specific consideration of what, on an everyday level, "family values" really mean. She described the ways the "debate" over values shifted the terms of the discussion from the real to the symbolic, carefully eliding the role of the government in perpetuating real problems—the gender gap in wages, the lack of affordable child care—that put real single mothers in such a bind.

As a recently divorced single mother herself, Pollitt knew a bit more about the subject than the boy vice president—

both about raising kids and about the messy and complicated reasons for divorce. "I am still waiting for someone to explain why it would be better for my daughter to grow up in a joyless household than to live as she does now, with two reasonably cheerful parents living around the corner from each other, both committed to her support and cooperating, as they say on 'Sesame Street,' in her care," she wrote.

The best of Pollitt's essays (her deconstruction of the media coverage of the William Kennedy Smith rape trial, her exploration of "the strange case of Baby M") carefully and deliberately challenge assumptions so many of us take for granted—about women, about morality, about feminism. Pollitt is as critical of her putative feminist allies as she is of the family values crowd. She challenges both the "difference feminists" (who celebrate the feminist virtues of allegedly feminine traits like nurturing and caring) and those who promote "feminism [as] a kind of assertiveness training, by which women can overcome external barriers to professional success."

Pollitt's nuanced, exploratory style of writing fits uneasily at best into a public discourse given over to soundbites and certainty. Perhaps that is why she is not as well known as the feminist celebrities of the moment—from Susan Faludi to Naomi Wolf—whose ideologies are more easily reducible to slogans. Unfortunately, that's often the fate of those who really make us think.

—David Futrelle

Soul Make a Path Through Shouting

By Cyrus Cassells

Copper Canyon Press

\$12

Among life's great treasures are the books one returns to time and again, for refreshment, for the renewal of embittered reservoirs of moral vision and imagination. With the publication of Cyrus Cassells' *Soul Make a Path Through Shouting*, I'm blessed to make another entry in my own version of that list.

Cassells, a gay African-American poet, demonstrates in *Soul Make a Path Through Shouting* poetry as prophecy, in the fullest, most subversive, biblical sense of that much-abused word. While forcing us to look with unshrouded eyes at the horrors that are both our lot and our responsibility, he simultaneously points us toward the "narrow gate" to social justice—to a better, more humane world of the future. He invites us, regardless of faith, to take up the metaphorical cross in a shattering tour of the most scarring events of a blood-drenched century: the AIDS plague, the struggle for integration in the South, the war in Afghanistan, the Spanish Civil War and, of course, the Holocaust.

Indeed, the Holocaust poems are among the strongest in the book, combining moral outrage and description of the indescribable, with an affirmation of the unquenchable

thread of human dignity that winds its perilous way through "The bone-white wind of this century/ A prayer-shawl of human ash."

Sometimes the writing seems somewhat contrived, over-written, self-indulgent, as though Cassells is competing with himself to come up with the gaudiest image possible. But such spots are thankfully few. The vast majority of these poems resonate with an intoxicating command of rhythm, image and richness of metaphor.

—Chris Faatz

The Uses of Haiti

By Paul Farmer

Introduction by Noam Chomsky

Common Courage Press

432 pp., \$14.95

Most pundits—and for that matter most Americans, have tended to look upon the current American intervention in Haiti as little more than the outgrowth of a misguided humanitarian impulse toward a country mired in a mess of its own making. Why, *Chicago Tribune* columnist Stephen Chapman asked, should American lives be put at risk in a country so "small, poor [and] remote"?

Port-au-Prince is closer to Washington, D.C. than, say, Denver is—but why let mere geography stand in the way of a firm conviction? As Paul Farmer shows in gory detail in the pages of his new book *The Uses of Haiti*, few countries have historically been less remote from the United States. Farmer's book is both a historical overview of Haitian history and an indictment of American policy—indeed, given the massive and deleterious consequences of American involvement in the island nation over the past two centuries, the two projects are inseparable.

Many American commentators were surprised by Jean-Bertrand Aristide's lukewarm response to an American occupation army a bit too friendly to the brutal military thugs Bill Clinton had only just denounced. This is hardly new. Americans, Farmer notes, have tended to view Haitian suspicion of American actions as little more than an outgrowth of "a Haitian tendency toward paranoia." But Haitians have good reason to be suspicious of American "favors." The American occupation of the country from 1915-1934 mainly served to complicate an already messy situation. And the American government has always been far more comfortable with Haitian dictators than with reformers like Aristide. "The Haitian people are asking not for charity," Farmer points out, "but for justice."

Farmer occasionally falls prey to the temptation to oversimplification, and lets his anger overpower his argument. But, in this context, passion is far less a crime than the self-serving cynicism that fills so much of the discussion of the issue. *The Uses of Haiti* is a valuable corrective to newspaper headlines that obscure more than they reveal.

—David Futrelle

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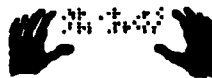
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Continued from page 40

cates of free trade denounced the law as the product of an elitist, anti-democratic state bureaucracy on its last legs.

The law passed with votes from Toubon's own center party. An opinion poll cited in the press found 93 percent of French in favor. But opinion polls are an American invention; who believes them? My impression was distinctly different. The French public, hit by the worst recession since the '40s, worries about unemployment, corrupt politicians and increasing crime among the disaffected young. *L'affaire Toubon* is strictly for laughs.

Sure enough, in August the Constitutional Court threw out Toubon's law, ruling that it infringed on freedom of speech as guaranteed by France's 1789 Declaration of Human Rights. The government could legally police the utterance of its own officials, but commerce and the media were outside its domain. Life triumphed over theory; youth over age.

This is no mere figure of speech. The language quarrel divides the generations. On one side you have those whose lives were shaped by de Gaulle, the War, the Occupation, the Resistance, the loss of France's overseas colonies. Remembering de Gaulle's dictum that nations decline from power to glory to prestige, they make the French language an instrument of foreign policy. The results are sometimes benign (annual Francophone Olympics where youngsters from the former colonies compete in outfits designed by Balenciaga) and sometimes sinister (the debacle in Rwanda, prepared, his critics say, by President François Mitterrand's blind spot for the Francophone Hutus against the rebel Tutsis, trained in Anglophone Uganda).

On the other side you have those who grew up with TV, rock'n'roll, cheap travel, massive immigration into France from the former colonies, the global economy and years of structural unemployment. The safely ensconced, old-guard purists vs. the insecure young postmoderns. The appeal of Americanese is that it's more fluid, less hierarchical than French, which has been pruned and codified for centuries by a group of pompous old guys in the Académie Française. French kids adopt Americanese the way East European dissidents wore jeans and ran jazz fan clubs in the '60s and '70s, to show their impatience with the status quo.

Franglais, by the way, is spelled English and pronounced French. The other way around is no longer Franglais, but—such is the legitimizing power of orthography—good French, as in the standard bistro cheap meal, *stackfrites*. Why not naturalize the American invaders with a simple spelling change, one wag suggested. T-shirt could become *ticheur*, etc. Franglais would disappear, and with it, the raging controversy.

The movie critic at *Libération* made a brave start in that direction, signing off a column on the subject with a breezy *Bâ-baille* (bye-bye). Bailler, you see, is French for yawn. ◀

Suzanne Ruta is a political satirist and cultural critic.



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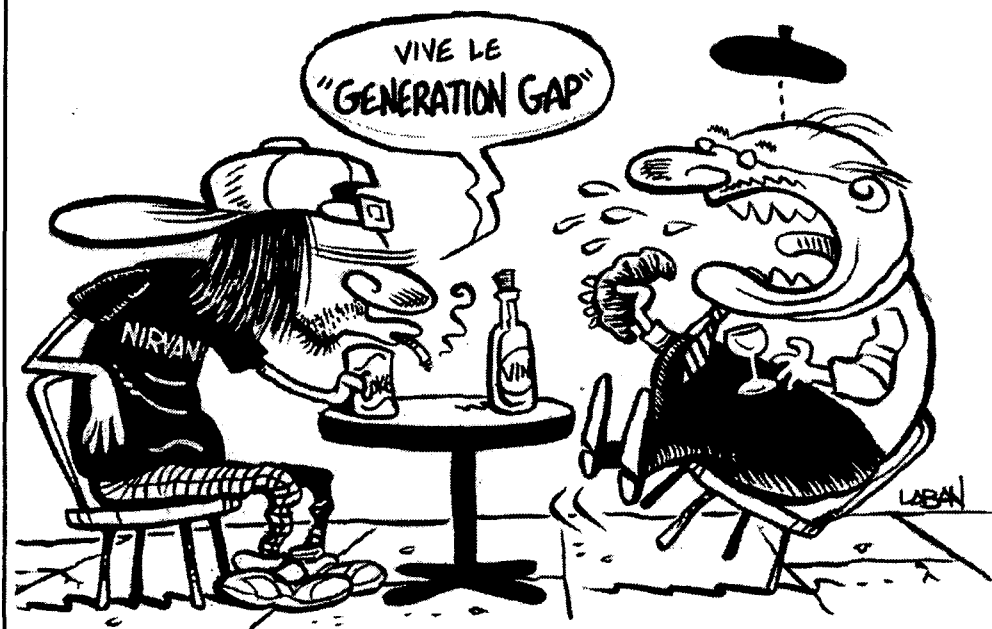
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I N T H E E N D

Francophone Games 1994



By Suzanne Ruta

The first time I saw Paris was in 1964. The franc was weak, the dollar strong, but French prestige and moral rectitude were high. Jean-Paul Sartre had just turned down the Nobel Prize. As an American exchange student, I expected to be snubbed, and I was not disappointed. "*Votre travail pululle d'anglicismes,*" my prof scrawled in red ink at the bottom of my first assignment: Your work swarms with Anglicisms. As if they were gnats or fleas.

But times have changed. The dollar's weak, the franc is strong and France is a nation of trans-Atlantic wannabes. Their language bores them. They prefer ours. Consider: A Breton hog butcher with global marketing ambitions calls his growing commerce "Olympig." The sugar cubes in every Paris bistro are labeled "Daddy" (as in sugar daddy?). Renault markets a small four-door sedan called "Kid" with walls and seats of faded blue denim. Rival Citroën puts out the "Bebop," upholstered in a jazzy red-blue-green design, Mondrian dumbed down by marketing executives. Even the political press swarms with Anglicisms. Both the stodgy right-wing *Le Figaro* and the trendy left-wing *Libération* report on politics in the words of Carville and Matalin: le

challenger, le flop, le wonder-boy, le self-made man.

Even stranger: the people who invented the double-entendre have become tired of delicate suggestion in matters of the heart. They want to lay it on the line. The phone line, that is. The *Minitel*—the computerized, interactive service run by the state telecommunications monopoly—makes phone sex available to every household in the country. You dial 3615 TOSS for a good time on "*le Minitel du TOSSing.*" Or, if you're really daring, 3615 CUM. Deep in the countryside—in Catholic, conservative Brittany, a disco called *Le Marilyn* runs Friday night events for "single people." On a more rarefied level, a critic in *le Figaro* asks Mexican poet Octavio Paz whether he believes in "*le big bang de l'amour.*"

The French take their language very seriously, and a backlash was inevitable. A law introduced this spring by Jacques Toubon, France's *ministre de la culture et de la francophonie*, mandated the

use of French in public and private schools, at scholarly conventions, in print, radio and TV advertising, on billboards, in employment contracts, in user's manuals. It imposed 10,000-franc fines for first-time violators; 20,000 for repeat offenders; 50,000 francs and six months in jail for those guilty of obstructing enforcement.

The law specifically prohibited the use of foreign loan words in cases where a French equivalent exists. Since the mid-'70s, when a similar (if seldom enforced) law was passed, a quasi-official High Commission for the French Language has overseen these coinages. The glossary of government-approved terms is available via Minitel. You dial 3617 DICO and they give you the legal French for TOSS? Difficult. Four-letter words in French tend to have at least six letters.

This was probably not the reason the left abstained from voting when the bill reached the Chamber of Deputies in late June. The Socialists maintained that you couldn't legislate the appeal of a language. Communist opponents of free trade denounced the law as a feeble stop-gap: Frenchmen's jobs, not their verbs, needed protection. Conservative advo-

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